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# LETTERS

FROM

# BARON HALLER

TO

# HIS DAUGHTER.

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FROM

BARON HALLER

TO

HIS DAUGHTER,

ON THE

*TRUTHS of the* CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN.

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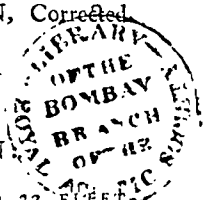
The SECOND EDITION, Corrected.



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LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. MURRAY, NO. 32, FLEET-STREET.

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## TRANSLATOR's PREFACE.

THEY who have ſtudied Nature moſt, and penetrated deepeſt into her ſecret receſſes, have convinced themſelves and others, that human ſcience is bounded by a narrow horizon, and that our knowledge is imperfect within the circle. Beyond the ſphere of mortal viſion, lie many truths which we can neither diſcern nor comprehend. A conviction of the weak-

neſs of human underſtanding prepares the philoſophic mind for the admiſſion of truths, which exceed its capacity to diſcover upon moral evidence. A little philoſophy leads to atheiſm: a great deal brings back the mind to religion. *Paſchal, Bacon, Boyle, Berkley, Maclaurin, Boerhaave, Newton, Clarke,* in proportion as they explored with ſucceſs the myſteries of creation, felt their breaſts warmed with devotion to its great Author and Governor. —The name of HALLER, which is already ſo illuſtrious in the world of letters, will one day be venerable and dear to the friends of religion and virtue, the num-

A thouſand incidents, which paſſed unheeded by the vulgar eye, brought the Deity to his mind; nor could he at the mention of that great name, in whatever company or circumſtances he happened to be placed, refrain from ſome pious ejaculation, with his eyes and hands lifted up towards *Heaven*.

While his humane and feeling mind embraced in the bonds of love all his fellow men, and intereſted him in their preſent and future concerns, there was one perſon whom God and nature had recommended to his peculiar tenderneſs and care. He had a daughter, dear to him as his

his own ſoul. He knew the inquietudes to which the common lot of humanity would ſubject her throughout life, and the fears that would alarm her tender breaſt at the approach of death, of which, it was ſome conſolation to him, that '*he would not live* '*to be the mournful witneſs.*' To her he addreſſed, at different times, but in a regular ſucceſſion, theſe Letters, which were afterwards, by his permiſſion, publiſhed for the benefit of the world at large. They have met, on the continent, and it is to be hoped they will meet, in this iſland, with a favourable reception. For,

1ſt. The

1ſt. The author has exhibited, in an incredibly ſmall compaſs, the completeſt defence of Chriſtianity, in our judgment, that has yet been offered to the world. Other writers have urged particular arguments in favour of this cauſe—with great ability and ingenuity. BARON HALLER collects the beſt arguments of the ableſt divines in every period of Chriſtianity; arranges them in a judicious order; and brings their united force into one centre of percuſſion. Thoſe rays which have ſeparately flowed from the genius and induſtry of eminent Chriſtians in different ages and nations, he gathers into one *focus*, and

and thereby illuminates his object, with the full effulgence of knowledge and of grace.

2dly. It is not only his object to ſhew that Jeſus of Nazareth was a perſon divinely commiſſioned from Heaven for the reformation of the world; but that he was in reality *the Son* of God, and that he poured out his ſoul a propitiation for the ſins of men.—We have defenders of Chriſtianity, Socinians and Arians, who frame ſyſtems of religion to themſelves, and then prove this religion by texts of ſcripture. Finding that they cannot raiſe their conceptions to the ſublimity of all Divine truth;

truth; they think they do good ſervice to the cauſe of Chriſtianity by lowering Divine truths to human conception. Thus they admit certain parts, and reject others, of a ſyſtem that muſt be wholly rejected or wholly admitted. BARON HALLER receives with pious awe, even what he cannot comprehend, and with humble confidence walks forward into thoſe regions where, according to the figure of the poet —'Lame Faith leads Underſtanding blind.'—Yet even there, in thoſe ſacred walks, where the grandeur and incomprehenſibility of the ſurrounding objects lay proſtrate the powers of the human mind, he finds room for the exerciſe

exerciſe of reaſon in the ſervice of the Chriſtian cauſe. He ſhews the credibility of myſteries which exceed our comprehenſion, by manifold analogies taken from the proceſs of nature in the inanimate, animal, and rational world. He analyzes, in ſome degree, the œconomy of Divine Grace, vindicates even the hardeſt doctrines of Chriſtianity, if we may be allowed this expreſſion, and throughout all its parts juſtifies the ways of God to man.

3dly. There is ſomething in theſe Letters of BARON HALLER which not only convinces the judgment, but which operates upon the heart,

and

" Mighty God, the Everlaſting Fa-
" ther, the Prince of Peace. Of
" the increaſe of his government and
" peace, there ſhall be no end, upon
" the throne of David and upon his
" kingdom, to order it and to eſta-
" bliſh it with judgment and with
" juſtice, from henceforth even for
" ever." This prophet expreſsly fore-told the very place of his birth; declaring, that a great light was to riſe in Galilee of the Gentiles, for there was Nazareth ſituated. He alſo ſpecified the family of which he was to be born, and that was of Jeſſe the father of David. *The voice of one crying in the wilderneſs,* which was a kind of an harbinger to the Meſſiah, was alſo to prepare for his coming. Mildneſs was to be the character of his reign; peace was to flouriſh upon the earth, and of his empire there

was to be no end. He promiſed, that in this happy age, *the wolf ſhould dwell with the lamb, and the ſucking child play on the hole of the aſp.* He farther ſpeaks of him in theſe words: " He ſhall not cry, nor lift up, nor " cauſe his voice to be heard in the " ſtreet. A bruiſed reed ſhall he not " break, and the ſmoaking flax ſhall " not be quenched: he ſhall ſeek " judgment in the earth, and the " iſles ſhall wait for his law. His " church ſhall extend as far as the " earth; remote people ſhall be con- " verted to him, and ſhall bring to " an end the ungrateful nation of the " Hebrews." And in order to ſuppreſs that worldly temper of the Jews, which induced them to expect a temporal monarch, a king of human race, who ſhould reign with uncontroled power, he has been very care-

ſul to deſcribe, in the moſt pointed and expreſſive terms, the humble condition in which the Meſſiah was to appear, and the ſufferings which were reſerved for him; but who would afterwards be exalted to the higheſt ſtate of dignity. He repreſented him, at the ſame time, as a perſon whoſe exterior form would be humble, and whoſe appearance would be the meaneſt amongſt the children of men.—"He ſhall grow before "him, ſays Iſaiah, as a tender plant, "and as a root out of a dry ground, "he hath no form nor comelineſs; "and when we ſee him there is no "beauty that we ſhould deſire him. "He is deſpiſed and rejected of men, "a man of ſorrows and acquainted "with grief; and we hid as it were "our faces from him; he was deſpi-"ſed, and we eſteemed him not.

" Surely he hath borne our griefs and
" carried our ſorrows; yet we did
" eſteem him ſtricken, ſmitten of
" God, and afflicted. But he was
" wounded for our tranſgreſſions, he
" was bruiſed for our iniquities: the
" chaſtiſement of our peace was upon
" him, and with his ſtripes are we
" healed. All we like ſheep have
" gone aſtray; we have turned every
" one to his own way, and the Lord
" hath laid on him the iniquity of us
" all. He was oppreſſed and he was
" afflicted, yet he opened not his
" mouth. He was taken from priſon
" and from judgment; he was cut
" off from the land of the living; he
" made his grave with the wicked
" and with the rich in his death, be-
" cauſe he had done no violence, nei-
" ther was any deceit in his mouth.
" Yet it pleaſed the Lord to bruiſe
" him;

" him; he hath put him to grief:
" when thou ſhalt make his ſoul an
" offering for ſin, he ſhall ſee his ſeed,
" he ſhall prolong his days, and the
" pleaſure of the Lord ſhall proſper
" in his hand. He ſhall ſee of the tra-
" vail of his ſoul, and ſhall be ſatis-
" fied; by his knowledge ſhall my
" righteous ſervant juſtify many; for
" he ſhall bear their iniquities. There-
" fore will I divide him a portion
" with the great, and he ſhall divide
" the ſpoil with the ſtrong; becauſe
" he hath poured out his ſoul unto
" death, and he was numbered with
" the tranſgreſſors; and he bare the
" ſins of many, and made interceſſion
" for the tranſgreſſors."

Almoſt all the prophets have predicted the deſtruction of the Jewiſh nation, and the eſtabliſhment of a new kingdom, without compariſon

more extenſive than that of Judah, and in greatneſs infinitely ſuperior to it, at the time when it ſhould be governed by the kings deſcended from David. The ſtyle of theſe predictions is in the oriental manner; and indeed could not be otherwiſe, to make any impreſſion upon the minds of the inhabitants of thoſe hot climates; where language, for many ages, even before the time of Moſes, was always highly figurative, and to whom the proſaic, uniform diction of the northern people, appeared inſupportably frigid and diſguſting.

In many other paſſages we diſcern evident traces of the promiſed Redeemer. The place of his nativity is mentioned; and notwithſtanding the addition of certain circumſtances extraneous to him, yet we may plainly diſcover a perſon ſpoken of, whoſe lineage

lineage would be very ancient, whoſe days would be eternal, and whoſe coming would exterminate idolatry.

To this ſucceeded the famous prophecies of Daniel; which were ſo clear and accurate, that Porphyry, not being able to refute them, endeavoured to invalidate their divine authority, by inſinuating that they were written after the event had happened. The ſuſpicions of this ancient writer, who has been too ſucceſsfully followed by the free-thinkers of the preſent age, may, with equal propriety, be applied in oppoſition to what we find in the writings of this prophet concerning the kings of Syria and Egypt. All the prophecies which regard the Meſſiah, were free from every appearance of compulſion—the book of Daniel was tranſlated into the Greek language more than two centuries

before the coming of Chriſt; which tranſlation was in the hands both of the Jews and Gentiles.

Daniel, having addreſſed the Almighty in private prayer, that, out of his abundant goodneſs, he would pardon the ſins of his people, and rebuild Jeruſalem, received in a viſion this anſwer — "Seventy weeks are "determined upon thy people, and "upon thy holy city, to finiſh the "tranſgreſſion, and to make an end "of ſins, and to make reconciliation "for iniquity, and to bring in ever-"laſting righteouſneſs, and to ſeal "up the viſion and prophecy, and "to anoint the moſt holy. Know, "therefore, and underſtand, that "from the going forth of the com-"mandment to reſtore and to build "Jeruſalem, unto the Meſſiah the "prince, ſhall be ſeven weeks; and "threeſcore

" threeſcore and two weeks the ſtreets
" ſhall be built again, and the wall,
" even in troubleſome times. And
" after threeſcore and two weeks
" ſhall the Meſſiah be cut off, but
" not for himſelf: and the people
" of the prince that ſhall come, ſhall
" deſtroy the city and the ſanctuary,
" and the end thereof ſhall be with
" a flood, and unto the end of the
" war, deſolations are determined;
" and he ſhall confirm the covenant
" with many for one week; and in
" the midſt of the week he ſhall
" cauſe the ſacrifice and the obla-
" tion to ceaſe; and for the over-
" ſpreading of abominations, he ſhall
" make it deſolate, even until the
" conſummation, and that determin-
" ed ſhall be poured upon the de-
" ſolate."

In another place, other events are foretold

foretold by this prophet; the time in which they were to happen is preciſely marked; and it was ſignified to him, that it was yet at ſome diſtance, but that he who was reſerved for this period, ſhould not enter into his reſt till the completion of theſe days. It was farther intimated, that the end of the world, for this is the ſenſe of the original, was to be reckoned from the time that the daily ſacrifice ſhould be aboliſhed, and that abomination ſhould be introduced, which was to be the cauſe of the great deſolation that was to follow.

I purpoſely omit ſome particular characteriſtics of the Meſſiah, which are ſcattered in the writings of the prophets; more eſpecially thoſe that have a doubtful or ambiguous complexion.—I ſhall reduce the few materials which I have collected from the

the prophecies, to the following obſervations.

In all the ancient books, on whoſe authenticity we may ſafely rely, this point of doctrine is conſtantly and invariably inculcated—That there would appear in the world a perſon of great dignity, who would bring ſalvation with him, and would re-eſtabliſh juſtice.

This eminent perſonage is deſcribed under different characters. He was to ſpring from the poſterity of the patriarchs Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, and from one of the deſcendants of David. He was to aſſume the prophetic office, and to perform ſupernatural works.

His power was not to be ſupported by force or violence; he was to reign by perſuaſion, by kindneſs, and benefits.

The

The place of his birth was fixed, and the exact time of it determined. The edict of the king of Persia was the epoch whence this computation was to be made.

His sufferings are described in a circumstantial manner; and painted in lively and pathetic colours. His death was also positively foretold.

But that which makes the greatest impression upon my mind, are the following particulars—the grandeur and debasement which are blended in this extraordinary person, his divine origin, his mediatorial office, his sufferings, the meanness of his appearance, and the duties he discharged as redeemer of the world. This portrait hath not its original amongst mankind; it never was conceived by the wit of any mortal being. The Jews themselves, who in preference to the

rest

reſt of mankind, were to receive the Meſſiah, to whom in a more particular manner he was to be a Saviour, and who were his diſciples and neighbours, could not, however, be perſuaded that he was the perſon deſcribed by the prophets. Their ſordid minds, could form no other idea of a prince of the royal houſe of David, but as a king, the poſſeſſor of a throne, a conqueror, and a victorious monarch.

The prophets, notwithſtanding, had united, in the moſt poſitive and expreſs terms, this grandeur and meanneſs of condition in the character which they had drawn of the Saviour of mankind.

This perſon, they ſaid, is from all eternity; he will carry with him ſufficient proofs that he proceeded from God alone; yet he will be born, will live

live in the greateſt poverty, will ſuffer and be put to death.

He will riſe from the dead; he will reign for ever; he will ſhower down his bleſſings upon all people; he will appeaſe the Supreme Being; he will reſtore to men that juſtice which they had loſt. He will die, not for himſelf but for the world; he will be bruiſed for their offences, he will lay down his life as an oblation for ſin.

From the foundation of the world, there hath appeared but one man in whom are united all theſe characteriſtics; and this was Jeſus of Nazareth, born in Bethlehem, deſcended from David, always addreſſed by that name by thoſe who had recourſe to him for relief; whom the people would more than once have placed upon the throne; whoſe parents were expoſed to great danger

danger becauſe of their ſon, and who eſcaped death by reaſon of their poverty and abject condition.

This Jeſus preached his doctrine without noiſe and tumult; he did nothing but what was good; the rectitude of his conduct was invariably the ſame, and never was calumniated; he was held in reſpect during the three firſt centuries after his coming into the world, in thoſe ſorrowful times when the religion which he had announced, was condemned by the laws of the Pagans, mortally hated both by them and the Jews, and expoſed to the cruelleſt aſſaults —when nothing prevented the enemies of the faith from making the ſtricteſt reſearches, to diſcover any fault with which they might accuſe its author—in thoſe times, when a learned ſophiſt, at the head of the

firſt

firſt univerſity in the world, attacked the Chriſtian doctrine by his writings, and employed all the artifices of the moſt inveterate perſecutors, to exterminate it from the face of the earth—in thoſe times, when a Celſus endeavoured to load it with the foulеſt reproaches—when a Lucian attempted to expoſe the Chriſtians to ridicule, by the keenneſs and ſeverity of his ſatire—when the Jews anathematized and deſerted them, as apoſtates from their religion and worſhip, and exhibited againſt them a moſt inveterate animoſity, which they imbibed, as it were, in their cradle—in thoſe times ſo unfavourable to the Chriſtian cauſe; no one, however, impeached the innocence of its divine Author —no one attacked the integrity and ſimplicity of his firſt diſciples. He ſaid of himſelf, and this indeed was

the ſubſtance of all his diſcourſes, and of thoſe of his apoſtles, that he came into the world to ſuffer for the ſins of men. In conformity to this deſign, he reſigned himſelf into the hands of his enemies: he received, as a diſciple, one who, under the ſemblance of friendſhip, betrayed him; whoſe perfidy and intended guilt were however perfectly known to him. His laſt diſcourſes were an interceſſion in favour of his deluded people, and his laſt words were a declaration, that he had accompliſhed his taſk.

By his death, the glorious promiſes of the prophets obtained their full accompliſhment. An immenſe kingdom extended itſelf over all parts of the earth, and ſprung, as it were, from his blood. The Gentiles, in great numbers, embraced the Chriſ-

tian faith; the profeſſion of which, notwithſtanding, expoſed them to almoſt inevitable death. Their manners were reformed; and an univerſal charity was introduced into the hearts of thoſe, who before had hated all nations, except themſelves. Chaſtity ſucceeded to that profligacy and impurity, with which their very temples were defiled. Freedom was given to the ſlaves; and the world became one family of brethren, united by ſimilar ſentiments.

This character, which was too ſublime for the reaſon of man to imagine or conceive, was perfectly realized in Chriſt; in whom we may diſcern all thoſe features which are ſo clearly marked by the ancient prophets.

He whom God only could deſcribe by his ſervants, ſo many ages before his coming, appeared at laſt with true greatneſs—a greatneſs reſulting

ſulting from the immenſe benefits of the ſacrifice of himſelf, which no man could foreſee, becauſe no man was capable of it.

The character of ſo divine a perſon, deſtined, however, to puniſhment, was never imagined by the wiſeſt of men; and when the original was actually ſeen, it was to the Jews a ſtumbling block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs.

Since the firſt converts amongſt the moſt enlightened nations of the Eaſt, judged it neceſſary, in purſuance of the deſign they had in view, to conceal from their diſciples the mean appearance of the mediator or redeemer whom they preached, would Iſaiah, if he had been influenced by the ſame prudential motives, have drawn a picture, which was without reſemblance, either in human events,

or in any ideas which had been conceived by man? Could there be found a perſon ſo impious as to aſſume the character of the Saviour of the world; a character of great utility to mankind, but which could not fail to bring upon him who perſonated it, if he would literally accompliſh the prophecies, a long train of labours and ſufferings, and at laſt a ſhameful death?

It is eaſy to be ſeen, from an examination of the actions of our Saviour, that no impoſtor could poſſibly, by any artifice, realize in his own perſon, all thoſe circumſtances ſo particularly enumerated by the prophets; theſe could only be completely verified by him, who was the true archetype of the repreſentation which was given. He muſt be born of a certain family, and of the blood of David.—Bethlehem

lehem muſt be the place of his birth, and this light muſt firſt ſhine in Galilee. The time of his coming and his oblation had been fixed; the manner in which he muſt be interred, was particularly deſcribed; after his death the ſacrifice was to ceaſe; the enſigns of the Romans, ornamented with the images of their falſe gods, were to be diſplayed in a place where they ought never to have appeared; he was himſelf to live in poverty, and to ſhed his blood for the ſins of men; but his ſpiritual kingdom was to be infinite, as well in extent as duration. It was therefore requiſite that the Meſſiah ſhould accompliſh in his own perſon, all thoſe predictions of the prophets, if he would be recognized as the character whom Iſrael, for ſo many ages, had expected.

It had been impoſſible for a mere

human being, without the aſſiſtance of God, to have diſtinguiſhed himſelf by all thoſe characteriſtics, which were neceſſary to appear in the Meſſiah. Add to this, the time of his birth, his genealogy, and the great effects produced from trivial cauſes; above all may be mentioned, the prodigious ſucceſs which attended his miniſtry, though the time was ſo ſhort, and the country ſo deſpiſed, in which he was employed, in teaching a doctrine that ſpread itſelf into all places, and has been perpetuated through every ſucceeding age.

There is nothing which ſo much diſtinguiſhes the Chriſtian religion, as its oppoſition to the paſſions and inclinations of human nature. The example of its great founder is unprecedented. Where ſhall we find a man, who like him, devoted his whole

whole life to labour; preferred a ſtate of poverty and contempt; expoſed himſelf to continual dangers, without expecting any other fruit, than inevitable death?

It evidently appears, then, that no human addreſs or artifice could inveſt a perſon with the diſtinguiſhing characters of the Meſſiah: and even if it had been in the power of any man to have aſſumed them, it would have been a proof of prudence and diſcretion to have declined the arduous taſk; ſince it could procure him nothing but ſufferings and diſtreſs.

## LETTER VIII.

*Cauſes and effects of the zeal and the courage of the Apoſtles. Nature and force of the proof of Chriſtianity, from Miracles. The Miracles of our Saviour, not only evidences of his Divine Power, but alſo of his wiſdom, goodneſs, and diſintereſtedneſs.*

TO what then muſt we attribute the wonderful effects which followed the preaching of the goſpel? Muſt we aſcribe them to chance? Was it in the power of twelve perſons, of mean condition, their minds unenlightened by ſcience, and not converſant with the great myſteries of revelation—was it in the power of ſuch perſons to reform the world? Theſe conſequences flowed from a firm perſuaſion, that Jeſus was the perſon foretold by the prophets. This well-

well-grounded conviction was the only weapon that rendered them victorious, in the dangers and perſecutions which they encountered: it was this which placed them above the corrupt deſires of human nature, of ſelf-love, and of the prejudices of birth and educa-tion. The zeal which was kindled in the diſciples of our Saviour, communicated itſelf to a great num-ber of perſons, who were ſoon ani-mated with the ſame affections. But what was it which produced in them this perfect conviction, that Jeſus was the Meſſiah? They had been witneſſes to the purity of his manners, and the innocency of his life; they perceived that his doctrine was, in all reſpects, worthy of God; they clearly diſcerned in him, all the lineaments and characters of the pro-miſed Meſſiah; and, in ſhort, they had

had ocular demonſtration of his miracles. Without having recourſe to all theſe conſiderations, which are powerful motives of belief, and of themſelves capable of producing conviction, let us conſider, that theſe men, who were naturally timid; whoſe inclinations were attached to the things of this world; who were poſſeſſed neither of great natural nor acquired abilities, would hardly have formed of themſelves ſo great an enterprize, as that of ſubjecting the world to a man who had been crucified. Much leſs would their inſtructions have produced ſuch inſtantaneous effects, or operated ſo powerfully upon the minds of ſo many thouſands of people.

Among the cauſes which wrought conviction in the minds of the apoſtles, I mentioned the miracles of our Saviour. It will therefore be proper,

in this place, to conſider the reality of, and the neceſſity for them, becauſe they afford a ſolid proof in ſupport of Chriſtianity, ſufficient to produce the aſſent of reaſonable men. And I think this diſcuſſion the more neceſſary, as our modern free-thinkers have been pleaſed to ſay, that the doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt is indeed worthy of reſpect; but that the miracles on which we would ſupport it, are the only cauſe which prevents them from conſidering the author as a divine perſon.

An uninterrupted ſeries of events, all relating to the ſame object, are ſufficient to perſuade men, accuſtomed to reflection; and who can trace the conſequences of things. The exact reſemblance which we remarked betwixt Jeſus Chriſt and the Meſſiah promiſed by the prophets, muſt unavoidably produce conviction in thoſe who

who have diſtinctly examined their ſucceſſive predictions, and compared them with the hiſtory of the life of our Saviour. But all men are not capable of making theſe enquiries. Thoſe, however, who are placed in the loweſt ranks of ſociety, are as much the objects of the Almighty's paternal regard, as thoſe who are dreſſed in purple, or ſeated on a throne, who, like the reſt of mankind, are ſubject to mortality. I will even venture to affirm, that a truth, proved by a long train of conſequences, however well connected, will not operate, with ſufficient efficacy, in the enlightened minds of thoſe who are capable of perceiving this connexion; it makes no impreſſion on their ſenſes; it is a *light*, but not a *fire*.

The proofs, therefore, of the divine

vine miſſion of our Saviour, ought to be ſimple and obvious; ſo that the more ignorant part of mankind may be ſenſible of their force—be convinced and perſuaded by them, though they have not the advantage of learning, or great natural penetration. Yet theſe grounds of belief muſt be ſo ſolid, ſo conformable to the ſpirit of the ancient prophecies, and ſo perfectly conſonant with the known attributes of God, that they muſt be capable of ſatisfying more cultivated minds, and ſuch as have been accuſtomed to reflection.

It reſted with the Divine Goodneſs, to adopt ſuch means as might not only procure the ready acquieſcence of faith, but alſo all due reſpect to him, who was the miniſter choſen for the accompliſhment of his deſigns. The perſon deputed to perform this buſineſs,

buſineſs, was to bring with him ſuch infallible tokens of a divine miſſion, as could not be produced, but by one really ſent from God. And what proof is there more effectual than the power of working miracles? they operate immediately upon the ſenſes. In order to feel their force, there is no need of laborious inveſtigation, or profound knowledge. The impreſſion they make muſt neceſſarily be the ſame with that which is produced by the evidence of ſenſe. If I ſee before my eyes an object that is red, I cannot be miſtaken in regard to its colour; with no leſs certainty am I convinced, that a human body is actually dead, after it hath been four days in the grave, and exhaled thoſe putrid effluvia which proceed from corruption. But when this dead body, at the command of another man, riſes,

riſes from the grave, and is endued with the ſame powers of motion that it poſſeſſed before; when, to the appearances of putrefaction ſucceed all the ordinary ſigns of life; when the dead body walks about, ſpeaks, and, in my preſence, for a conſiderable ſpace of time, performs all the uſual functions of vitality, every man ſurely, who is not deſtitute of common ſenſe, muſt infer, with the utmoſt confidence, that the dead body, by a viſible though a ſupernatural effect of the omnipotence of God, hath been reſtored to life.

The proof, which reſults from miracles, is equally intelligible and convincing to all men. Who, that ſees before his eyes the preſence of the Divinity in the operation of a miracle, can remain unmoved with admiration, or withhold that profound reſpect which

which is due to ſo powerful a Being? This manner of perſuaſion is more animated than all the demonſtrations of philoſophy: it inſinuates itſelf, through the *medium* of the ſenſes, into the mind, where it begets an humble reverence of that God, who thus condeſcends to reveal himſelf to mortals. It was this divine teſtimony, that inclined many thouſands of people, unenlightened by knowledge, to proclaim Jeſus their king; who, according to their ideas, was the Meſſiah of whom the prophets had ſpoken. It was this that induced the apoſtles to ſubmit with chearfulneſs to death; they ſaw the power of God diſplayed in him; they regarded his doctrine as the voice of God, who ſpake to them by the miracles which Jeſus wrought. They placed an abſolute confidence in the promiſes of eternal

life; and they judged them perfectly ſure, becauſe they were made by a man in whom God viſibly dwelt. It is to this cauſe we muſt aſcribe the converſion of St. Paul, and that ardent zeal with which he was afterwards actuated—a man well imbued with all the learning of the Jews, but whoſe mind was obſtinately inimical to the doctrines of Chriſt; and in whom the pride of conſiſtency would have maintained the ſpirit of unbelief againſt any thing ſhort of the evidence of his ſenſes. He travelled through all the provinces of the empire, and with an unſhaken intrepidity, even in chains and in death, affirmed that Jeſus was the Son of God. It was not a profound ſtudy of the prophets, or an attentive compariſon of the hiſtory of Chriſt with the ancient prophecies, that produced this change: his converſion was

the ſudden effect of a miracle. Theſe very prophets, of whom we ſpeak, have repreſented miracles as a ſign which would characteriſe the true Meſſiah.—"The blind, ſay they, "ſhall ſee, the lame ſhall walk, when "the doctrine of ſalvation ſhall be "announced to the miſerable." Our Saviour oftentimes appealed to theſe miracles, as a proof that he was ſent from God. "If, ſays he, you "believe me, believe the works "which I do." He declared that he ſhould conſider thoſe men as innocent and blameleſs, who refuſed their aſſent to the truth of his doctrine, if they had not an opportunity of ſeeing thoſe works, which no other man had done; and his diſciples were not afraid to declare openly to the people, and in the great aſſembly of the nation, that Jeſus had made himſelf known by his miracles.

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The nature of the miracles which he was to perform, had been alſo foretold. His prodigies were not to be of that marvellous kind, which would only ſerve to gratify vanity. He cauſed neither mountains nor temples to be removed from their places. They were neither acts of ſeverity nor puniſhment. His works were without oſtentation though benevolent in their effects; ſuch as Iſaiah had predicted ſeveral ages before. Maladies, before incurable, diſappeared at his command; the eyes of the blind were opened, the lame walked; children deprived of life, were reſtored to their diſconſolate parents. His diſciples, when angry, breathed nothing but revenge; but he would not, at their ſolicitation, call down fire from heaven upon a town whoſe inhabitants had treated

him with contempt. The Phariſees and Sadducees, who were profeſſed enemies to every religion, experienced not the avenging power of him whom they had blaſphemed. Theſe miracles were a proof of his modeſty as well as his humanity. He required no recompence for the favours he had conferred; he would ſcarcely permit thoſe perſons whom he had relieved from diſtreſs, to offer him the merited tribute of thankſgiving. He refuſed to hear himſelf praiſed by thoſe whom he had miraculouſly delivered from their infirmities; and when the people were deſirous to proclaim him their king, he prevented them by a ſpeedy retreat.

I have already remarked in the conduct of this divine perſon, that he was particularly careful to cauſe no diviſion in the Jewiſh church. He did

did not place himſelf at the head of a ſect; he obſerved the religious ceremonies which were then in uſe; he aſſiſted at their ſolemn feſtivals; and was preſent at the celebration of ſeveral of the paſſovers. He took care to ſend to the chief prieſts a leper whom he had healed, that he might obtain permiſſion from them, according to the law of Moſes, to enter again into ſociety, from which his former diſorder had excluded him. He enveloped, with great addreſs, his divine leſſons in the obſcurity of parables, that the common people, who were his auditors, might not eaſily penetrate into their meaning; and he threw a ſhade over the brightneſs of thoſe truths which he had brought from heaven to earth, at a time when they might have been the cauſe of much trouble and diſturbance.

That wiſdom, which knew the affairs of the world, and was well acquainted with times and ſeaſons, never availed itſelf of theſe circumſtances for any temporal advantage. This conduct, therefore, has prevented the enemies of revelation from ſtarting, as an objection, that the Redeemer of mankind acted from human or intereſted views.

But the miracles which he wrought, were fully ſufficient to accompliſh his deſigns; they were numerous, and were infinitely ſuperior to all the powers of man; in them the finger of God was evidently diſcovered. Many were performed in public, and before the eyes of great multitudes. Lazarus was raiſed from the dead, in the preſence of his enemies. Jeſus knew that the time of his death was approaching; he therefore made choice

choice of this opportunity, to give an extraordinary proof of the divinity by which he acted, notwithſtanding the meanneſs of his appearance. For this end he purpoſely abſented himſelf; he went not to Lazarus till there were ſufficient demonſtrations of the total extinction of life; not till four days had elapſed ſince he died—ſufficient time for putrefaction in ſo hot a climate—that there might not be the ſhadow of a doubt reſpecting the reality of his death. When he came, he found the dead body wrapped in cloaths uſed at interments, and his face covered. Jeſus called him in the name of God his Father; and this voice reſtored Lazarus to life. He aroſe; and, it is generally thought, lived a long time after his reſurrection; becauſe the Jewiſh hierarchy had formed the horrid deſign

of putting him to death, that he might not remain a living witneſs of the ſupernatural power of Chriſt. This miracle was performed in the preſence of his enemies, and of many Jews, who aſſiſted at the event, and who informed the Phariſees of the fact to which they had been eye-witneſſes, and which, they confeſſed, exceeded the power of man. But the greatneſs and reality of this miraculous work was the cauſe of haſtening the death of him who had performed it.

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## LETTER IX.

*The Reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt, the great evidence of the truth of the Chriſtian religion. An appeal conſtantly made to this fact by the Apoſtles and firſt Chriſtians. The nature, neceſſity, and propriety of the proof of our Saviour's divine miſſion, by his reſurrection. The conduct of his diſciples inexplicable upon human views or motives. The enthuſiaſm of the diſciples of* Mahomet, *and of the martyrs of* Japan *accounted for and compared with the heroic courage and zeal of the Chriſtian apoſtles and martyrs. The true ſource of the holy zeal that animated the diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt.*

THE Reſurrection of Chriſt himſelf, is another ſtriking event, deſigned, in a more particular manner, to convince the world that he was the Son of God. The oppoſite circumſtances of debaſement and dignity have

have never in any other inſtance been contraſted in the ſame perſon, by ſuch extremes of fortune. *Jeſus of Nazareth*, during the whole courſe of his life, appeared in a ſtate of humiliation; and of this humiliation, his death was at once the ſeal and conſummation. As he appeared in this humble ſtate, ſo, in order to fulfil the predictions of the prophets, and to correſpond exactly to the deſcription they had given of the Meſſiah, it was neceſſary that he ſhould appear in a ſtate of exaltation. If he had remained in the grave, the attributes of the Divinity which were to dwell with the Meſſiah, could not have been recognized in him; we could not have diſcerned thoſe prerogatives which were to diſtinguiſh him from other mortals; there would have been no reſemblance in the portrait which the prophets had

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drawn of the Saviour, who was to come.

We may remark, that in all the diſcourſes of the apoſtles, addreſſed either to the Jewiſh people, to the Sanhedrim, or even to the Gentiles, the reſurrection of our Saviour was the great argument uſed by them to demonſtrate the Divinity of their maſter. For the inhabitants of Athens, who were not much verſed in matters of religion, imagined, after they had heard St. Paul uſe this proof, that the reſurrection was the goddeſs, the worſhip of whom he wanted to introduce. Chriſt himſelf often referred the incredulous Jews to the proof which his reſurrection would furniſh, when they required of him a ſign from Heaven to confirm his divine miſſion. Nay farther, the promiſe

miſe which he had made of his reſurrection, was accommodated afterwards not without ſome violence to their prejudices.

Every man who would eſtabliſh his faith upon reaſonable foundations, ought to weigh this proof with attention; and I would earneſtly recommend to him the conſideration of it. Truth loſes nothing by being cloſely examined. The proof which we have adduced, will ſerve to confirm the divinity of our Saviour. The Jewiſh prieſts had uſed all imaginable precaution to prevent the body of Jeſus from being ſtolen; for they were well acquainted with the promiſe which he had made in ſuch expreſs and poſitive terms, that he would riſe again. It is well known, that the Roman diſcipline was very ſevere and exact. A detachment of ſoldiers of that nation,

tion, were appointed to watch the door of the ſepulchre, where the dead body was laid, wrapped in funeral cloaths, according to the cuſtom of the Jews, with a preparation of aromatic ſpices, to prevent the diſagreeable effects of the cadaverous effluvia. At the entrance was placed a large ſtone, and to this ſtone was affixed the ſeal of the magiſtrate. In ſpite of all theſe precautions, the dead body was gone. We can frame no other excuſe for the guards than this, that they ſlept, and that the diſciples of Jeſus, attentive to every thing which paſſed, took that opportunity of carrying the dead body away. This apology expoſed the ſoldiers to a ſevere puniſhment; but they were flattered with the hopes that the martial law would, in their caſe, be diſarmed of its rigour, by the preſents which ſhould

ſhould be made to thoſe whoſe duty it was to carry it into execution.

Four days after the reſurrection of our Saviour, the diſciples being aſſembled together, were ſummoned to appear before the Sanhedrim. They ſpoke alſo to the people in the temple. Their firſt and conſtant defence was this—That Jeſus, whom they had crucified through their blindneſs and obſtinacy, was riſen from the dead. So extraordinary a miracle defeated all the deſigns of the Jewiſh council, and rendered their efforts of no avail. This defence, therefore, of the apoſtles, it was their intereſt to diſcredit; for if it were admitted that Chriſt had riſen, they could no longer conſider his death as an event which muſt annihilate his new doctrines; this would rather be alledged as a convincing proof of the divinity of his miſſion; it would be one of

the characteriſtics by which he would be known; and his reſurrection would be another. The Meſſiah could not be more diſtinguiſhable, than by theſe circumſtances—that after he had ſuffered for our offences, he roſe again, and was raiſed by God to partake of his eternal glory. But the means employed by the council, (who were by no means deſtitute of ſagacity) were but badly calculated to accompliſh the ends they propoſed: none of their actions ſeemed to be dictated by common prudence. They did not publicly and ſolemnly accuſe the apoſtles of propagating a falſhood; they did not examine cloſely and judicially the depoſitions of the ſoldiers; they did not invite the people to ſee the dead body of Jeſus; which, if riſen, muſt have appeared with a countenance more than human, but if he were an impoſtor, muſt have been ſtill

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in the grave. The council perceived the boldneſs and intrepidity of the apoſtles; they ſaw the attachment of the people to them; and that the number of thoſe who acknowledged him for the Meſſiah, was much greater than when he was alive, and diſplayed his miracles amongſt them. Their honour alſo was at ſtake; they, therefore, uſed every method in their power, to exculpate themſelves from the accuſation that they had put to death an innocent man. For if they could not diſprove the reality of the reſurrection, it was no longer one of the common people whom they had unjuſtly accuſed, but it was the Son of God, and the Saviour of Iſrael, whom they had murdered.

The principal men amongſt the Jews could not but ſee, that the new converts to Chriſtianity, whoſe num-

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bers daily increaſed, had abandoned the religion of the murderers of a maſter, whom they had eſteemed and honoured as a divine perſon; and had formed themſelves into a powerful ſect, who deſpiſed their dignity, and deſpoiled them of the privileges which they had enjoyed, and of the title they had aſſumed, of heads and rulers of the church.

It would have been an eaſy matter for them to have juſtified themſelves, if the reſurrection of our Saviour had not been real. There were living witneſſes, to whom they might have appealed in reſpect to the part they bore in the tranſaction; as they were preſent, and were able to have given an accurate and unſophiſticated relation of what they ſaw. The large ſtone which had been rolled to the door of the ſepulchre, muſt have been

ſufficient to have ſecured the dead body in the place where it had been laid. There were alſo witneſſes of the actions of Jeſus then living, to whom they might have appealed for information; and if the miracles reported of him had been falſe, they might eaſily have been detected.

None of theſe prudential precautions, however, were taken. The chief prieſts enjoined the apoſtles ſilence; this was the only means of juſtification adopted by the council. But the apoſtles choſe rather to obey God than man. They continued to preach, and to affirm, that God had raiſed from the dead that Jeſus whom they had crucified, and had taken him up into heaven.

Whence were the apoſtles animated with ſo great courage? They who had before diſcovered ſuch marks of timidity,

timidity, as to betake themſelves to a ſhameful flight when the enemies of their maſter came to apprehend him? —when the moſt reſolute amongſt them, at the approach of danger, had the weakneſs to deny that he knew this Galilean? In this time of peril, they betrayed a cowardice which can hardly be excuſed; they forſook that maſter whoſe miracles they had ſeen, whoſe doctrine, having for a long time heard, they eſteemed as divine, and whoſe power, ſo ſuperior to the laws of nature, they had ſo often admired.

After his death, his diſciples would have denied him, if that death had not been followed by a reſurrection. Without this laſt circumſtance, no credit would have been given to what he had ſaid. His diſciples would no longer have cheriſhed the hopes of a

ſecond and glorious appearance of their maſter. They would no longer have expected a part, either of his kingdom, or of the ſalvation he was to procure for his people, or of thoſe bleſſings which he was to diſpenſe. They muſt have been obliged, with ſorrow and confuſion, to confeſs, that they had been deceived, and to return to their former occupation of fiſhing. Such is the conduct which they muſt have been determined to follow, by the common diſpoſitions and feelings of human nature. And by this conduct they might naturally hope to eſcape that puniſhment they had reaſon to apprehend, for conceiving the horrid deſign of publiſhing a falſhood, which they perfectly knew to be ſuch. For what could be more abſurd or contrary to common ſenſe, than to expoſe one's life, in order to perſuade the

the world that a man was the Son of God, whoſe death had atteſted the contrary?—who had uſurped the title of Meſſiah, and ſuffered himſelf to be honoured as ſuch, though it muſt be neceſſarily known that he was not the promiſed Saviour?

The mortification alone of being ſo cruelly duped, muſt have been ſufficient to have cauſed in the minds of the apoſtles, a deteſtation of the memory of him whom they had regarded as the Son of God—who had impoſed himſelf on them as the promiſed Meſſiah, to which glorious character he had no pretenſions. They had, beſides, other more urgent motives to induce them to withdraw themſelves from him, or to deny that they had been his diſciples. Their maſter was delivered up to the Jewiſh council without making any reſiſtance—was

reduced to the loweſt ſtate of ignominy, and ſuffered a ſhameful death. What could the diſciples expect, but cruel perſecutions — the hatred of thoſe whom their maſter could not oppoſe, and, in a word, miſery and misfortunes of the worſt kind? It appears, that in the whole courſe of their life, they ſought no temporal recompence: and how could they expect it, when they perſevered in their deſign of ſupporting an impoſture? The ſecular arm was againſt them; and they muſt have been convinced in their own conſcience, that they were labouring for the glory of a man, who was now unmaſked to the world, and they themſelves could not but confeſs, was not he who was promiſed. By what means could they have gained proſelytes to a man, who ſo little merited eſteem and reſpect?

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Certain it is, that their actions were different from the ordinary conduct of mankind; neither did they ſeem to be directed by thoſe paſſions and inclinations which have reigned in all hearts, in all times, and in all countries—*This Jeſus, whom you have crucified, is the Son of David, the anointed of the Lord, the Redeemer of Iſrael.* This they boldly dared to aſſert, in the midſt of prieſts armed with church authority—in the midſt of a multitude of people who had ſeen Jeſus expire, and who believed as a certain truth, for which they had the teſtimony of their own eyes, that he was only a mere man. Whence proceeded that heroic firmneſs which never abandoned the miniſters of our Saviour, and which, in the midſt of a ſhower of ſtones, ſhone with triumphant brightneſs in the countenance of

St. Stephen? Whence that undaunted intrepidity, which the firſt preachers of the goſpel carried with them before the tribunal of emperors, before kings, amongſt the moſt enlightened nations, and in all parts of the world? which ſpirit of fortitude they preſerved, without diminution, for many years, even to the end of their miniſtry.

I am aware, that, in all times, men of a warm temperament, and zealouſly attached to any favourite doctrine, have maintained it with invincible courage, and have laid down their lives in ſupport of it, though the doctrine was, in fact, erroneous. This idea occurred to me, from conſidering the conduct of the followers of Mahomet; who, inflamed with zeal, have ſpread his doctrine from place to place, not in-

timidated by the proſpect of death, to which they were expoſed in the accompliſhment of their grand deſign.

To theſe I might add the martyrs of Japan, who ſuffered death with great reſolution, for a kind of Chriſtianity that they profeſſed, which, at leaſt amongſt the greateſt part of them, may be called prejudice or infatuation; becauſe none of thoſe numerous believers were acquainted with the ſcriptures, though they ſeemed to die in defence of a doctrine which was there taught.

This enthuſiaſm, I muſt confeſs, is no proof of the truth of thoſe dogmas, for which their advocates are inſpired with ſuch ardent zeal. Though it muſt be allowed, that the doctrines for which the martyrs already mentioned ſo earneſtly contended, were not unmixed with truth; and it was principally theſe truths which kindled

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that zeal which rendered ſo conſpicuous the diſciples of Mahomet, as well as the inhabitants of Japan. The former acknowledged the unity of God, in oppoſition to the polytheiſm of the heathens; and though the doctrines they received were human, they had, however, the effect of diſpoſing them to reverence the true Saviour.

But there is an eſſential difference betwixt this kind of martyrs and thoſe who, at the price of their blood, rendered themſelves a teſtimony of the divinity of Chriſt. The Japaneſe ſuffered for a ſyſtem which was taught him, but of the truth of which he had no other proof, than the confidence which he placed in his inſtructors; who were not, however, witneſſes of the facts which they maintained. His death hath not

proved

proved that Jeſus Chriſt was crucified, more than a thouſand years before, in Paleſtine, and that he was truly the Saviour of the world. The Japaneſe had been only informed of theſe things; he had not ſeen them; he had not compared the writings of the prophets with thoſe of the apoſtles, neither had he weighed the fact reſulting from it, that Jeſus was of a truth the Saviour of men. This he had been ſimply told, and upon no other evidence he believed it; and as it is the cuſtom of that people never to temporize on account of any violence employed againſt them, this but the more confirmed him in his perſuaſion; becauſe his perſecutors, inſtead of endeavouring to convince him by argument, attempted to terrify him by menaces and puniſhments.

The Japaneſe might be a man of honour,

honour, though his faith might be erroneous.—With reſpect to the apoſtles of our Saviour, one of theſe two things muſt be admitted; either that their teſtimony is true, or that they were remarkable impoſtors. If the miracles attributed to Jeſus were not really performed; if it be not true that he roſe again; and ſtill the apoſtles affirmed theſe two things, they muſt then be regarded as deceivers and falſe teachers, who ſpoke of facts which they affirmed to have ſeen, though they were not ſuſceptible of illuſion, nor were their ſenſes liable to be impoſed upon. They declared, that they had ſeen a dead man raiſed from the grave; had converſed with their maſter ſeveral days after he was riſen; had ſeen him many times after he had been three days in the ſepulchre; had touched him, had heard him ſpeak,

had

had received his orders and inſtructions, and were with him at the very time when he aſcended into heaven. All theſe circumſtances were ſubject to the examination of the ſenſes; they could therefore judge of them with certainty. If then the apoſtles had not ſeen theſe things, or any reſemblance of them, they cannot be conſidered as enthuſiaſts actuated with a good deſign. They were, I again repeat it, deteſtable impoſtors, who deſerve the contempt of mankind, for preſuming to aſſert as a truth, what they were well convinced was falſe.

But to return to the queſtion, which I have already propoſed. Whence proceeded that heroic courage, which ſtimulated men ſo timorous, ſo much attached to the preſent life and its advantages, to announce Jeſus as the Saviour of the world; and even in the

the preſence of his murderers, after that his death had poſitively decided this point ſo much to his diſadvantage, and had ſeemingly removed every appearance of doubt? We can aſſign no other reaſon but this—They had actually ſeen him before his death perform many miracles, and after his death riſe again. The power of God, which extends even to the dead, ſhone ſo conſpicuouſly in Chriſt, that they could not but perceive in him all the traces of the promiſed Meſſiah. His apoſtles were perfectly ſatisfied, from the teſtimony of their own ſenſes, and the conviction of their own minds, that Jeſus was the Son of God. They could not therefore diſavow it, or deny what they were well perſuaded was true. This it was which made them ſeek death with a kind of impatience, that they might

might meet their benevolent maſter, and receive from him the recompenſe of their labours. Neither the hatred which they incurred, the perſecution which they ſuffered, nor death itſelf, could ſeparate them from him whom they eſteemed as divine.

The frequent converſations which they had with him, after his reſurrection, diſſipated all their doubts, and wrought in the minds of the apoſtles, a perſuaſion ſo perfect and entire, that Thomas addreſſed himſelf in terms which none of the reſt had yet employed—*My Lord and my God!* This would have been ſaying too much to a man, if he had not triumphed over death. But Chriſt ſuffered him to make uſe of this language, even praiſed him for it, and conſidered it as an inſtance of his faith, that he had called him not only *God*, but

*his God.* This remark will ſerve as an anſwer to the inference drawn by thoſe perſons, who have collected from the goſpel, all the paſſages where Jeſus Chriſt, during the time of his humiliation, appears to be inferior to the Father.

At preſent there is evidently a perfect connexion in the hiſtory which the apoſtles have given of Chriſt. They announce to the world the glory and elevation of the promiſed Meſſiah, whom they had ſeen from the beginning, and in every ſtage of his life. He was not only a teacher ſent from God, but one who performed ſuch works as were contrary to the ordinary courſe of nature. Theſe two circumſtances had no other effect upon the apoſtles at firſt, than to convince them that he was the prophet which God had promiſed to

his

his people. But at the time of his ſufferings, and of his death, their faith was ſtrangely ſtaggered. "We "hoped," ſaid they, ſorrowfully, "that "this was *He* who ſhould have re-"eſtabliſhed the kingdom of Iſrael." —At this moment of fear and apprehenſion, Chriſt appeared again alive. This reſurrection removed every doubt. They ſaw in him the glory of an uncreated being; they acknowledged him to be their God; they lived for him, and for him they conſented to die. This conviction, which God, who had appeared to them, and whom they had ſeen, had operated in their minds; this irreſiſtible conviction, I ſay, conduced alſo to the converſion of the world.

The Jews, who, by their ſeditious humours, had obliged the judge to paſs ſentence of condemnation againſt

Jeſus—thoſe Jews, who, at the time of his death, inſulted the apoſtles with the bittereſt railleries, fell at his feet a few days afterwards, and at the feet of thoſe men whom they had ſo much deſpiſed. They entreated the diſciples to make known to them the way of eternal life.—"Men and bre-"thren," ſaid they, "what ſhall we do "to be ſaved?"—The important inſtructions they received on this occaſion, were not delivered from the ſeat of Moſes; nor by men authorized to teach, as being the ſucceſſors of the prophets; nor by a Gamaliel, highly reſpected and eſteemed as the oracle of the people; but by the obſcure followers of Chriſt, who had attended him the whole time of his miniſtry, had learned his doctrines, and been enlightened by his divine leſſons.

Here

Here then is diſplayed the power of that conviction, which, according to the promiſe of our Saviour, inſpired a ſmall number of laymen whoſe minds had never been cultivated by education, with the moſt exalted fortitude. It was this which gave them ſo eminent a ſuperiority over the philoſophers and great perſonages of that age; and at laſt confounded and put to ſilence every effort of human wiſdom. This ſame ſpirit manifeſted itſelf ſtill more remarkably in the conduct of St. Paul. The zeal with which he was enflamed enabled him to make ſome impreſſion upon a Pagan king, of a debauched and vicious life; who, when he had heard him, and was moved by the thunder of his eloquence, aſcribed it to a deprivation of reaſon.

It was this conviction which pro-

duced in the diſciples of Jeſus, a contempt of death; and, under the daily expectation of martyrdom, enabled them to contemplete their approaching end with chearfulneſs and joy. This effect may be alſo aſcribed to the longing hope and deſire they entertained of being with Chriſt, to the ſanctity of whoſe character, and the mightineſs of whoſe works they had been ocular witneſſes. If the greatneſs which they attributed to him, were an impoſition, or the conſequence of a diſordered imagination, what could be their expectations from men in dying for him? Would not the dread of puniſhment have induced them to put off the maſk? Could they, in the midſt of that aſtoniſhment and repentance which now filled their troubled minds, have beheld, without fear, the preparations

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for a death which they juſtly merited, by preſuming to publiſh falſe miracles, in order to impoſe on the world? Yet their writings breathe nothing but conſtancy, reſolution, and tränquillity, at the very time when they were ſurrounded by the horrors of death. They ſpoke of their departure, and of other circumſtances relative to their approaching end, with a calmneſs and ſerenity of ſoul, not to be changed by any impending danger; they triumphed in the midſt of the ſevereſt tortures.

## LETTER X.

*The truth of Chriſtianity proved by miracles. That the apoſtles poſſeſſed the power of working miracles, admitted by free-thinkers, and even by* Middleton *himſelf. The abſurdity of the contrary ſuppoſition demonſtrated from the epiſtles of the apoſtles to the firſt Chriſtians. The reformation of religion, in theſe latter ages, from the errors of ſuperſtition.*

IN order to ſtrengthen the faith of the apoſtles, and give a ſanction to theſe firſt preachers of the goſpel, God enabled them to perform miracles, but in the name of Jeſus. They cured diſeaſes; and though they poſſeſſed neither ſilver nor gold, yet they commanded the lame to walk, and they did walk; the dead to be raiſed, and they were reſtored to life; which miraculous power has not been diſputed

puted to this day. Middleton himſelf, who was an avowed free-thinker, and diſputed the power of the church in the firſt ages to work miracles, has nevertheleſs acknowledged it in the apoſtles.

St. Paul, the moſt active of all the apoſtles, has expreſſed his ſentiments upon this ſubject with ſuch ſimplicity, and with ſo great confidence in the goodneſs of his cauſe, that they furniſh a teſtimony too ſtrong to be wantonly attacked. — "There are," ſays he, "diverſities of gifts, but "the ſame ſpirit. And there are di- "verſities of operations, but it is the "ſame God, which worketh all in "all. For to one is given by the "ſpirit the word of wiſdom; to an- "other the gifts of healing; to an- "other the working of miracles; to "another prophecy; to another di-

" vers kind of tongues; to another " the interpretation of tongues. All " are members of the ſame body; ſo " that one member ought not to " deſpiſe another. All theſe gifts " have their particular uſes; the eye " and ear are both neceſſary organs " to the body; the members there- " fore are mutually ſerviceable to each " other. Thus God hath ſet ſome " in the Church; firſt apoſtles; ſe- " condly, prophets; thirdly, teachers; " after theſe, miracles; then gifts of " healing; and afterwards diverſities " of tongues" (this the apoſtle hath put in the laſt place). " All," added he, " are not apoſtles; all are not " workers of miracles; all do not " ſpeak with tongues; theſe gifts are " divided; but without charity, the " gift of prophecy, and the knowledge " of languages, acquired not by ſtudy,

" but

" but by the communication of the holy " ſpirit, are but as ſounding braſs, or a " tinkling cymbal."—" I love rather," ſays he, in his letter to the Corinthians, " to ſee you inveſted with the " gift of prophecy, than to ſpeak in " unknown tongues; for a prophecy, " and a knowledge of the ſecrets of " the heart, produceth a more cer- " tain conviction in the minds of your "auditors."—The power of reaſoning was much eſteemed by this holy apoſtle, on account of its utility, and the effects it was capable of producing; though he poſſeſſed, in an eminent degree, a ſupernatural knowledge of languages. Upon this principle, he adviſes the Corinthians in what manner they ſhould employ their ſeveral gifts in their public aſſemblies; he directs, that one ſhould give place to another, for the exerciſe of the talent

lent peculiar to each, in order thereby to promote the edification of all.

We will ſuppoſe, my daughter, for a moment, with the incredulous of the age, that miracles are things impoſſible; that the Chriſtians of the firſt ages had no ſupernatural gifts; that they performed no miraculous cures; that the power of ſpeaking languages was a mere chimera, as well as that of diſcerning ſpirits, or diſcovering the ſentiments of other men; how great then muſt have been the temerity as well as extravagance of St. Paul, in preſuming to impoſe upon the Corinthians—men of ingenious, penetrating, and irritable minds, whom the ſmalleſt diſſenſion would eaſily provoke—a number of fabulous and ridiculous ſtories, for real facts, though they all knew them to be falſe, or, at leaſt, might have fully

ſatisfied

ſatisfied themſelves in this particular! Would not theſe Greeks, who were much addicted to raillery, have replied in ſome ſuch inſulting manner —"What does this frantic prater "mean by his extraordinary gifts, "who has not ſo much as made his "appearance amongſt us?"

Theſe Greeks, however, whoſe talent for ridicule and criticiſm was hereditary, read, with patience, the letter of St. Paul; and humbly ſubmitted to his remonſtrances, as to a ſervant of God. They excommunicated an offender upon his repreſentation, and deprived him of all communion with them, until they were aſſured of his repentance; they adopted ſuch regulations as he propoſed, and bore his reproofs with ſubmiſſion; being perfectly perſuaded, that he was endued with divine gifts, and that the leſſons

leſſons they received from him, with reſpect to their conduct, were wiſe and prudent.

We muſt here remark, that the apoſtles of Chriſt did not exerciſe the gifts with which they were endued, in private, nor in the preſence of a ſmall number of witneſſes, who might have been procured by colluſion; but publicly. Peter and John healed a lame man in the temple, about the ninth hour of the day, or, according to our method of computing time, about three hours after noon, which was the hour of public prayer, when there was a great concourſe of people in the temple. Paul and Barnabas had as many witneſſes, when they healed a great number of perſons at Iconia. It is an eaſy matter to work miracles among ſuperſtitious people, blinded with zeal; eſpecially when force is employed to

overawe diſputes and ſilence honeſt incredulity:—But in the preſent caſe miracles were wrought in the midſt of the moſt inveterate enemies to the name of Chriſt, and in the preſence of thoſe who were fully inveſted with the power of puniſhing them; and in whom it was a point of honour to diſcover any defect, or even ſuſpicion, in every miracle that was done in that name which they held in ſuch abhorrence.

The moſt learned amongſt the diſciples of Moſes, ſpared no pains in their reſearches and examinations; but it was not with the light of truth that they endeavoured to expoſe what they judged erroneous in the doctrine of Chriſt. Their only expedient was to ſilence thoſe by compulſion, who maintained a different opinion—a conduct entirely conſiſtent with that littleneſs

littleneſs of ſoul which the weakneſs of their cauſe inſpired.

Theſe miracles were not performed, as I obſerved before, in ſecret; nor near the bed of the ſick perſon, ſurrounded by his family, who, in ſuch caſes, would conſider every favourable change that might happen in the diſeaſe, according to its natural courſe, as a particular mark of the kind interpoſition of Providence: but they were done publicly, in the preſence of thouſands of witneſſes; their effect was ſudden and their operation inſtantaneous, which, in the ordinary progreſſion of nature, would have been ſlow and tedious. Theſe cures were effected without the aſſiſtance of any viſible means; no ſuperſtitious remedies were applied; no amulets or conſecrated taliſmen were employed; they were performed through the invocation of that God

who hath eſtabliſhed the laws of nature, and who hath the power of ſuſpending their action in ſuch circumſtances, as his diſpenſations for the benefit of mankind may require.

God, however, did not work miracles in a profuſe manner, and without any deſign. He vouchſafed to diſplay theſe prodigies to mankind, in order to confirm or introduce ſome great truths, which men were not diſpoſed to receive. Miracles were performed when Moſes endeavoured to ſelect a race of people from the reſt of mankind, that they might be preſerved in the profeſſion and belief of a pure religion, which was repugnant to their natural inclinations.—Miracles were wrought in the times of the idolatrous kings of Iſrael, when the true worſhip began to be corrupted, and idolatry to be inſtituted in its room; becauſe the

the Almighty choſe to preſerve amongſt them, a knowledge of the truth, and the expectation of a Meſſiah that was to be born of that people. Jeſus and the apoſtles were endued with the ſame ſupernatural power, in order to eſtabliſh the true religion, which had in a manner diſappeared from the face of the earth; and to inform men, that pardon for ſins was not to be procured either by money, or the performance of ſimple ceremonies; that God required, as a neceſſary preliminary, purity of heart, and an entire reformation of manners; and that the expiation of ſins could be made by no other means, than by the ſatisfaction of a mediator. God, out of compaſſion to mankind, hath judged theſe truths, on which eternity depends, important and intereſting enough to deſerve a diſplay of his abſolute power over

over nature, that he might thereby eſtabliſh them. When the doctrine of Jeſus had made a ſufficient progreſs amongſt men, and was deeply rooted in their minds, there was then a ceſſation of theſe miraculous gifts, as being no longer neceſſary: and we have no inſtances, at leaſt ſuch as are well atteſted, that God, in latter times, hath conferred on any individual theſe ſupernatural talents.

God was pleaſed, at a ſubſequent period, to reform the corruptions which had crept into the Chriſtian doctrine in the courſe of ages, and to bring to light thoſe important truths which had been long forgotten; amongſt which was, in particular, that ſinful man could not be reconciled to God by any means, which ſuffered the depravity of his heart to remain unreformed. He did not eſtabliſh

this truth in any other way, than by enabling men to compare the ordinances and precepts of the prevailing religion with thoſe of the immediate followers of Chriſt, which ought to be a rule of faith, and a model for all ages; and by placing them in a condition to oppoſe to the eſtabliſhments then ſubſiſting in the church, thoſe of the primitive times, whoſe promulgators were the diſciples of Jeſus.

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## LETTER XI.

*The evidence of Chriſtianity, though not of the nature of mathematical demonſtration, ſufficient to convince every candid mind. Sublime repreſentation of the Supreme Being. Divinity of Jeſus Chriſt aſſerted in oppoſition to Socinians. Myſteries no objection to Chriſtianity. This truth illuſtrated by ſeveral philoſophical obſervations. Obſervations on the word Perſon, improperly, in the author's judgment, applied to the Deity. Neceſſity of a divine mediator and inſtructor.*

I BELIEVE,—nay, I know for a certainty, that Jeſus was a juſt man; that he wrought miracles; and that he was really the perſon foretold by the ancient prophets. We find in him, all thoſe characteriſtics which were to diſtinguiſh the meſſenger ſent from God. It is but a mere evaſion to aſſert, by way of juſtifying our incre-

dulity, that thoſe truths, from whence we ought to derive our only conſolation, are not mathematically demonſtrated. The united teſtimony of ſo many witneſſes who were never ſuſpected of a combination, and who never retracted what they had ſaid; the proofs which preceded the coming of our Saviour; thoſe which accompanied it, and thoſe which followed, I mean the miracles of the apoſtles, are ſo many concurrent teſtimonies of truth, that it is impoſſible they ſhould all have met exactly at the ſame period, and formed, as it were, a maſs of evidence, for no other purpoſe but to give to falſehood the appearance of truth. No man who ſpeaks with ſincerity, will entertain any doubt of the exiſtence, the victories, or the murder of Julius Cæſar.

If then there are proofs ſufficient for

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us to believe that Jeſus was a teacher ſent from God—we muſt neceſſarily believe all that he ſaid. If he have neither himſelf deceived the world, nor been the agent of any impoſtor, ought we not to conclude that his word is truth? I am fully convinced, my daughter, of the abſolute infinity of the Supreme Being. Though our capacities are limited, we have a certain rule whereby to judge of the greatneſs of God, which is circumſcribed within no bounds. The univerſe, of itſelf immeaſurable in its extent, where the laws of nature are infinitely progreſſive, and not to be limited by human reaſon—this univerſe, in which are placed thouſands of ſuns, more reſplendent than this lower ſyſtem, one of the ſmalleſt planets of which we inhabit, where are placed millions of men and animals—this univerſe, I ſay, whe-

ther we conſider it in a comprehenſive view, or analyze but the minuteſt part of it, evidently diſplays a wiſe and almighty Being, the common creator of all things. The moſt perfect and ingenious performances of man, will not bear a compariſon with any of the works of God. His duration alſo, will give us ſome faint idea of his infinite greatneſs. This duration, is without beginning; the ſame to-day as yeſterday. It ſurpaſſes, it is true, our comprehenſion; we are finite beings, and therefore our exiſtence had a beginning; ſo that we cannot conceive in our minds, a Being who hath always exiſted. And when we extend this idea to eternity, that is, a duration without end, it is an abyſs, where reaſon is loſt and confounded. We ſee, however, in very intelligible characters, that God is the eternal and

invariable

invariable Sun, placed, as it were, in the center of this immenſe ſyſtem, to enlighten and ſupport it.

Men are apt to form too humiliating an idea of the great Governor of the world; they repreſent him too much like themſelves, and confine his power to this ſmall terreſtrial ſpot. They have even circumſcribed his protection to one nation alone, amongſt the many upon the face of this earth. The knowledge I have of nature, has inſpired me with other ideas of the omnipotence and greatneſs of God, before whom our globe is but as a grain of ſand. On this account, when I ſpeak of a man to whom the divine nature is united, I confeſs that this incomprehenſible myſtery aſtoniſhes me. Such a thought could not of itſelf have entered into the mind of man, neither could he have expected to ſee

an infinite Being united with one that was finite. No mortal could have preſumed to look for ſuch an exceſs of goodneſs on the part of an infinite and eternal Being, if this myſtery which ſurpaſſes human imagination had not been revealed.

But he, who can neither lie nor deceive, hath expreſsly informed us, that Jeſus of Nazareth was a man, the ſon of David, born of Mary, brought up as another man; ſubject to the infirmities of human nature, ſuch as hunger, thirſt, grief; that he ſenſibly felt the weight of his ſufferings, that he was even affected by the anticipation of them; and that at laſt he concluded the courſe of his life by an ignominious death. In his human ſtate, he acknowledged the ſuperior power of his father; he humbled himſelf before him, and even invoked his

his name; he repreſented himſelf as the way which was to conduct us to the father; he called himſelf the envoy and miniſter of his father; and it was through his name that he performed miracles.

We ſhould betray the cauſe of truth, and act in repugnance to our own conſcience, were we to aſſert, that we could ſee nothing in Jeſus, but a deſcendant of David, and a mere man. I am often aſtoniſhed at the inconſiſtency with which we may charge a very numerous ſect, who admit of revelation, and yet deny the divinity of Chriſt. They ſeem to me to act with leſs candour and integrity than thoſe who reject it altogether;—becauſe receiving as true the expreſs teſtimonies which have been given of the extraordinary qualities of Jeſus, they believe, upon that principle, the truths which he has eſtabliſhed.

Chriſt

Chriſt ſpake of himſelf, in terms which evidently diſcovered a dignity more than human—"Before Abraham "was I am; I came down from hea- "ven, where I dwelt with my father; "I came from him; I return to him, "where I was before, and where he "loved me from the foundation of "the world. I am the way, the truth, "and the life; he that believeth on "me, hath everlaſting life; the Fa- "ther hath put all things into my "hands; I will draw all men to me; "he is in me and I in him. He who "hath ſeen me, hath ſeen the Father; "I and my Father are one; all that "is his is mine; I will ſend you the "comforter from my Father; all "men ſhall appear before the throne "of my glory; theſe I will receive "into everlaſting felicity, but thoſe "ſhall go away into everlaſting dark-

"neſs. Baptize ye in the name of "the Father and the Son."—He, who was far removed from all human vanity, who, in the time of his humility, would not accept of the epithet of good, becauſe it belonged to God alone, and becauſe he who addreſſed him did not acknowledge him for God—he, who had thus voluntarily humbled himſelf, ſuffered without any reluctance Thomas, one of his apoſtles, after he was convinced of the reality of his reſurrection, to call him his *Lord* and his *God.* His diſciples worſhipped him when he aſcended into heaven. And as he had ſaid himſelf, that before the creation he was with God, ſo his beloved apoſtle, John, ſaid, likewiſe, *that the word was with God, and the word was God.—Salutation, honour and glory to our God, who is ſeated on the throne, and to the lamb*

*lamb who was put to death for the ſins of the world.—All things,* ſays St. Paul, *were made by him; thrones and dominions are his workmanſhip.*

I ſee no alternative; if Jeſus be true, and if he came from God, he is ſuperior both to men and angels; he who is from all eternity, is divine, adorable, and is united to God by the moſt intimate connexion.

We cannot form any idea of this union of the eternal Being with a mortal man, who, in this ſtate lived about three-and-thirty years;—but can we conceive, with more accuracy, the connexion of the ſoul and body? For *we* are compoſed of two ſubſtances. The one thinks, perceives, judges; though it is without parts and without extenſion: the other, on the contrary, poſſeſſes theſe properties. Theſe ſubſtances ſo different are, however,

united.

united. Every human creature is formed in part of groſs particles of earth; but quite contrary is the eſſence of my ſoul. I perceive the ſhock which my body receives, and I obſerve that it moves at the volition of the ſoul. This union is incomprehenſible, but it is not the leſs real; our own ſenſations confirm it daily. Our inability, therefore, to comprehend an union of a ſtill higher nature, can form no argument againſt its exiſtence. But this is not the only fact which we are unable to develope and explain; we cannot underſtand, for inſtance, the nature of motion; how it paſſes from one body to another; how it leaves one to agitate another, without ſuffering any alterations in itſelf, or permitting us to diſcern whether it is any thing extended, corporeal, or that may be meaſured.

Therefore

Therefore of all the objections propoſed by unbelievers, there are none more contemptible than thoſe, which are drawn from the difficuly of comprehending the manner in which things exiſt; or that which, in the language of the ſchools, is termed their eſſence.

When God commanded the laws of nature to ſuſpend their operation; when he inveſted Jeſus with a power of raiſing the dead; when he commiſſioned him to explain this great myſtery—*how the ſins of men could be pardoned*; it was eaſy to foreſee, and very reaſonable to conjecture, that this divine meſſenger would inform us of many things, which are incomprehenſible by the human mind, and which no language could clearly expreſs or develope. When he talks of the properties and attributes of the Supreme Being, is there not as much cauſe for aſtoniſhment,

aſtoniſhment, as if he had ſpoken of things incomprehenſible?

We find, however, no contradiction in theſe myſteries; and though we cannot underſtand their manner, yet it is not impoſſible for us to ſee the adequacy of the means uſed for accompliſhing the ends deſigned. In this point we cannot be deceived.

God hath joined the ſoul to the body, the divine to the human nature; a being indiviſible, ſimple, immeaſurable, without extent, without any corporeal property, to a body infinitely inferior to it; this is a truth of which we are abſolutely convinced. Though a diſquiſition of this nature falls not within my preſent deſign, yet the conſideration has been uſeful to me by way of example.

That a Being, incorporeal and indiviſible, governs the world; and that all

all motion is derived from him, though the operation is inviſible, are truths univerſally believed; Why then may he not act upon ſpirits, immaterial and indiviſible like himſelf? Why is it impoſſible, that the Divine Attributes, ſuch as wiſdom, goodneſs, juſtice, the power of working miracles, ſhould be imparted to a created ſpirit, and diſplayed in him, though after a particular manner?

I am no theologian, and therefore do not employ thoſe terms of art which have been invented by the diſputants, on the incarnation of our Saviour, and the union of God with Chriſt. I muſt, however, remark, that the word *perſon* is improperly uſed; ſince it implies, as every one knows, a thing different from every other thing, which thinks, wills and acts for itſelf only. Now we cannot

ſuppoſe

ſuppoſe any ſuch diſtinction in the Divinity. I think, however, that the words of our Saviour himſelf, oblige me to believe, and with a full acquieſcence of faith, that Jeſus was not a ſimple man, nor even a mere angelic being; but that the Author and Creator of all things, hath united himſelf, in an incomprehenſible manner, to beings which are not pure ſpirits, to the human ſoul of Chriſt, that in this ſoul were viſibly manifeſted divine qualities and perfections; and that this union of the Divine with human nature, was in Jeſus ſo intimate and perfect, that he both thought and acted as God thinks and acts—and that it was with juſtice, therefore, that divine honours were paid him, and that he was called God.

This myſtery appears to me the leſs ſtrange, as I clearly diſcern the rea-

ſons which induced the Supreme Being, who is infinitely merciful, to unite the Divine and the human nature.

When we ſay, that the Divinity, which ſo infinitely ſurpaſſes our conceptions, departs, on certain occaſions, from the ordinary method of governing the univerſe; that it hath wrought miracles; that out of many millions of human ſouls, it ſelected one in order to be joined with it; I can conceive that ſome great advantages muſt reſult from ſuch an extraordinary and unexampled effuſion of grace and beneficence; and that the wiſdom of God hath not adopted this plan, without having ſome important ends in view.

It was neceſſary that the perſon choſen to execute this ſcheme, ſhould be of eminent dignity; ſince he was to come into the world, to reveal the

truth—to perſuade men of the certainty of another life, and a future judgment—to eſtabliſh ſuch a ſyſtem of morality as might ſanctify us, render us acceptable to God, reform the human heart, and incline us to deſpiſe the things of this world, or at leaſt to hold them in no greater eſtimation than they deſerve. Experience hath often demonſtrated, and indeed the nature of things will not permit it to be otherwiſe, that a man ſubject to error and to ſin, is not a fit inſtrument to ſucceed in an enterprize of this kind. He who is polluted with vice, deprives himſelf of all that authority and reſpect which is neceſſary to command the minds of others, and to ſubjugate the human paſſions. He who is obnoxious to error, may miſtake in his endeavours to diſtinguiſh good from evil; he may err in

his judgment of what is true and what is falſe, and may therefore ground his precepts on wrong principles; he may exact from thoſe he inſtructs, too much or too little. A ſlave to his ſenſes, and to whatever flatters them, can he hope, that his doctrine will gain much credit, when he recommends the purſuit of thoſe things which are above, rather than theſe which are on earth?—Thoſe which are eternal, rather than theſe which are but temporal; the preference of futurity to the preſent moment? Or, when he deſcribes the purpoſes and attributes of God, will his diſcourſes be much attended to? He might reaſon, I confeſs, and draw ſuch inferences as reaſon would approve of; but his ſchemes would be imperfect, and his ſyſtems deficient in the moſt eſſential part: upon ſo weak a foundation,

he

he could not eſtabliſh a religion, capable of extending its influence to our conduct and deportment.

It was not enough, that Socrates profeſſed ſo pure a morality; or that the eloquent Epictetus poſſeſſed all thoſe talents which diſtinguiſhed the Greeks from other nations. Thoſe imperfections which are inſeparable from human nature; the defects, which we diſcover in Marcus Aurelius, and in Socrates, whom we have already mentioned—the virtue of the former being principally calculated to ſhine upon the ſtage; and the mind of the other not being exempt from a propenſity to voluptuous pleaſures—theſe circumſtances could not fail to deprive their doctrine of that aſcendency which it ought to have had over the hearts of men. Epictetus was but a feeble light in the midſt of a

few friends; he could not, like the ſun, illuminate whole nations, cauſe the ſeeds of virtue to germinate, or infuſe into them a vivifying principle. Confucius alſo wanted a greater degree of fervency; his doctrine was capable of rendering the people obedient to the laws of emperors, but not to thoſe of God; it might make them citizens, but not truly pious; it might give to its diſciples the appearance of virtue or wiſdom, but could not render them really good.

To Jeſus was committed the charge of reforming mankind, of impreſſing ſentiments of duty upon whole nations, and of rendering thoſe impreſſions permanent, as the means of attaining to eternal happineſs. This commiſſion he hath executed; neither was any other perſon qualified for ſo important an office. For eighteen centuries

centuries we have reaped the fruits of his coming into the world; our notions of the Deity are more perfect than were thoſe of the heathens; we know what we ought to do to pleaſe him; we have the firm aſſurance of a future life, and have received a ſyſtem of morality, pure and compleat.

To accompliſh this grand deſign, it was neceſſary that the Mediator ſhould be exempt from evil, nor ſhould even be accuſed of any; that he ſhould have a perfect knowledge of the divine Being, and of eternity; and that in all difficult caſes which might ariſe in the exerciſe of his important commiſſion, a wiſdom, free from error and incapable of being deceived, ſhould dictate to him how he ſhould ſpeak, and ſhould ſo direct him in all his actions, that he ſhould neither fear the ingenious malice of

men, nor the ſarcaſtical ſophiſms of a Julian; but ſhould be able to defeat all the efforts of Jewiſh obſtinacy, nor ſhould be in the leaſt affected by the ſatyrical reflections of incredulous men. The power of working miracles, which was either to be exerted or ſuſpended, according as circumſtances offered, ought not, by an effect of vanity ſo inſeparable from the human heart, to be diſplayed, on the one hand, with too much pomp, or on the other, with any appearance of ambiguity; that the Jews might have no room to exerciſe that malevolence ſo characteriſtic of their nation. Such a Mediator muſt not be liable to any ſurprize of the ſenſes; no criminal pleaſure, no paſſion of whatever kind, muſt tarniſh the purity of his conduct; he muſt be void of every inclination to anger; neither muſt

muſt the fear of death allay his zeal, or weaken his efforts to accompliſh the glorious ends for which he was to come into the world.

In a word, ſuch a Redeemer muſt be more than mere man; becauſe a man is always expoſed to error and to vice. But the Divinity with which Jeſus was inveſted, rendered his wiſdom compleat; baniſhed every paſſion; directed his miraculous powers; ſpoke through him in a manner not to be imitated by all the eloquence of man; maintained him conſtantly in a right courſe of action, without deviating from the great deſign which was the object of his heavenly miſſion. This Jeſus, who from the beginning had been with God, who was come from God, was alone capable of revealing his counſels to men. He to whom the Father had committed all judgment,

judgment, could alone inform men what the Divine Juſtice had prepared againſt the workers of iniquity. This union of God with Chriſt was doubtleſs a mark of goodneſs worthy of our admiration, without which the coming of Jeſus into the world had been of no effect.

LET-

## LETTER XII.

*That Jeſus Chriſt was a ſacrifice for the ſatisfaction of Divine Juſtice, proved from the writings of the prophets; from thoſe of the apoſtles; and from the declarations of our Saviour himſelf. Inconſiſtency of thoſe who admit the Divine inſpiration of the ſcriptures, yet deny the doctrine of the ſatisfaction made for ſin by Jeſus Chriſt.*

THE embaſſy of Jeſus Chriſt had other objects in view, more important ſtill, if that be poſſible, than what we have already mentioned; for the accompliſhment of which, it was not ſufficient that he ſhould be a mere man.

The deſign he had formed, was not only to inſtruct men in the truth, but principally to reconcile them to God. I have ſaid, in a preceding letter, that the

the means of this reconciliation was a myſtery, which mankind have endeavoured in vain to diſcover; which the greateſt ſages have examined with much eagerneſs and aſſiduity; but which it has been impoſſible for man to unravel.

All nations have had ſome confuſed ideas of it, ſome faint repreſentation, which they had derived from a tradition that had been handed down from the firſt of men. They thought, that atonement might be made for ſin by ſacrifice, or by ſhedding the blood of ſome animal. Moſes, who was commiſſioned by God to inſtitute a ceremonial worſhip, as being beſt adapted to the genius of the people amongſt whom he eſtabliſhed it, becauſe they were not ſuſceptible of other impreſſions than thoſe of the ſenſes, retained and ſanctified theſe

ſacrifices.

ſacrifices. But it was eaſy to perceive —God had very intelligibly explained himſelf upon this ſubject—that the blood of animals could not effect a reconciliation with him; and that the ſins which reigned in the corrupt hearts of men, were not to be obliterated by ſuch kind of fines or ranſoms. The deſign of theſe ceremonies, was only to remind them of their ſubjection and dependance on that ſovereign Being, who was the diſpenſer of all temporal bleſſings—to inform them that they were ſinners, and that they could expect the pardon of their ſins from his grace alone.

In the mean time the means of reconciliation had been revealed by God, and that upon an early and important occaſion, when fallen man, conſcious of guilt, ſtood trembling in

in the preſence of his offended Maker. We find ſome outlines of theſe means in the Pſalms, which ſpeak of a ſuffering Saviour; and thoſe Pſalms were more ancient than Homer. But Iſaiah, who lived before the time of Confucius, the philoſopher of China, hath clearly unfolded this myſtery. I will not repeat the texts which have been already quoted, I will only cite a remarkable paſſage of this moſt eloquent of the prophets.—" He was " wounded for our tranſgreſſions, he " was bruiſed for our iniquities."

" He is come who muſt execute " all the promiſes of God; he fore- " warned his diſciples that he muſt " ſuffer, but that his ſufferings would " be to their advantage; and that he " ſhould voluntarily lay down his " life*. He died for men, and gave

* Matt. xxii. 28. John v. 18.

" his

" his ſoul a ranſom for many. He " ordered his diſciples to ſolemnize " the remembrance of his death, " which was to be obſerved in after- " ages, by the ſymbols of bread " and wine; the former being broken " was to repreſent his body offered " to God for the ſalvation of men; " and the latter was to ſignify, that " his blood was ſhed for the pardon " of ſins*. He declared before his " death, that to drink his blood and " to eat his fleſh, were the indiſpenſa- " ble means of obtaining remiſſion " of ſins†. He ſaid, that he ſhould " lay down his life for his ſheep ‡. " That greater love hath no man " than this, that a man lay down

* Matt. xxvi. 16. 27.

† Mark xiv. 22. et ſeq. Luke xxii. 11. 19. et ſeq. 1 Cor. xi. 24.

‡ John x. 15.

" his

" his life for his friends; that is, for " thoſe who keep his command- " ments *. That God ſo loved the " world, that he gave his only be- " gotten Son, that whoſoever believ- " eth in him ſhould not periſh, but " have everlaſting life †."

After his reſurrection, he ſaid to his diſciples — " Ought not Chriſt," (i. e. according to the ancient prophecies) " to have ſuffered theſe things, " and to enter into his glory ‡?" It is this point of doctrine that Philip the apoſtle explained to the chamberlain of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians §.

The diſciples of our Saviour were more explicit upon the ſufferings of

* John xv. 13.
† John iii. 16.
‡ Luke xxiv. 26.
§ Acts viii. 30.

their

their divine maſter, and upon the happy conſequences of them. John ſays *, " And he is the propitiation " for our ſins; and not for our ſins " only, but alſo for the ſins of the " whole world.—He ſaw the Lamb, " which was ſlain, and hath redeemed " us to God by his blood, out of " every kindred, and tongue, and " people, and nation †.—Peter adored " the Deliverer, who hath borne our " ſins in his body upon the croſs, that " we being dead unto ſin, might live " unto righteouſneſs; by whoſe wounds " we are healed."

St. Paul, whoſe zeal much contributed to the progreſs of the goſpel, deſcribes in a particular manner, the advantages of this doctrine. " Be-

* 1 Epiſt. ii. 2. † Apoc. v. 9.

" ing juſtified freely by his grace,
" through the redemption that is in
" Jeſus Chriſt; whom God hath ſet
" forth to be a propitiation, through
" faith in his blood, to declare his
" righteouſneſs for the remiſſion of
" ſins."—In another place he ſays,
" But God commendeth his love to-
" wards us, in that, while we were yet
" ſinners, Chriſt died for us. For
" if when we were enemies, we were
" reconciled to God by the death
" of his Son, much more being re-
" conciled, we ſhall be ſaved by his
" life.—He was delivered for our of-
" fences, and was raiſed again for
" our juſtification. Chriſt died for us,
" according to the Scriptures.—One
" hath died for us, to the end that
" we might all live for him who
" died, and is raiſed again, for us.
" —God hath been reconciled to us

" in

" in Jeſus. — He, who knew no ſin,
" was made ſin for us, that we might
" be made the righteouſneſs of God
" in him. — Chriſt hath redeemed us
" from the curſe of the law, being
" made a curſe for us; for it is writ-
" ten — *Curſed is every one that hangeth*
" *on a tree.* — In him, and by his
" blood, we have the redemption
" and pardon of ſins. — Chriſt hath
" ſo loved us, as to give himſelf for
" us, an offering and a ſacrifice to
" God, for a ſweet-ſmelling ſavour.
" — He gave himſelf a ranſom for
" all, that he might redeem us from
" all iniquity."

Theſe texts may ſerve as a foundation to a great number of others, in all which there is a frequent repetition of this great truth — " This is life
" eternal, that they might know thee
" the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt,

" whom thou haſt ſent*." — " That " there is no other name under hea- " ven, which hath been given to men, " by which they can be ſaved."

I would therefore, my dear child, recommend to you, as a thing very neceſſary, to read, without any prejudice, theſe expreſſions which I have taken from the ſacred writings; and to conſider what is their proper and literal ſenſe. We are not yet arrived to ſo great a pitch of infidelity, as to deny the exiſtence of a God; every work of creation loudly confutes this hypotheſis: but there are many who cannot digeſt the doctrine of a Saviour ſuffering for mankind, the merits of whoſe death are imputed to them; they love rather to diſtort the meaning of ſcripture, and to explain it contrary to the rules of

* John xvii. 3.

ſound

ſound criticiſm; they had rather reject the whole, than agree to the opinion, that man ſtood in need of a ranſom. We ſhould have leſs reaſon to expoſtulate with theſe men, than with the atheiſts, if it were not proved, that the doctrines revealed are the word of God and of truth. But to acknowledge the divine origin of the Chriſtian religion, and refuſe to believe that Jeſus died for us, and that he hath reconciled us to God, is an inexcuſable contradiction, as well of itſelf, as of the truth which is admitted. It was not poſſible to expreſs in terms more clear than revelation has expreſſed them, theſe important doctrines—That men, by their ſins, had forfeited the favour of God; but that God, out of his infinite love, had promiſed them, by his prophets, that he would ſend his

only Son into the world; that he accordingly came at the appointed time, and, in conformity to the prophecies, ſuffered and was put to death; that his ſufferings have ſatisfied the Divine Juſtice; that he hath purchaſed the pardon of ſins to all thoſe who believe in him, and hath rendered them capable of inheriting eternal life; and laſtly, that there is no other way to appeaſe the juſtice of God, than by faith in his Son. I have here only deſcribed this doctrine, as we find it in the ſcriptures; I have not yet attempted to prove the truth of it.—I have obſerved, and with concern, that Chriſtians, when ſpeaking of theſe matters, have often employed very unbecoming expreſſions, ſuch as, *God is born, God is dead*; they ſeem, indeed, juſtifiable; but, at firſt ſight, convey to the mind,

mind, an idea at which it revolts; becauſe the Supreme Being is neceſſarily eternal and infinite, never ceaſed to be, and therefore was not born in time; much leſs could he be ſubject to ſufferings, to ſorrow, or to death. Jeſus, indeed, hath ſuffered; he hath endured inexpreſſible ſorrows; his will, though abſolutely reſigned to that of his Father, could not, however, withſtand the feelings of human nature, inſomuch that he prayed to his Father, that the bitter cup might paſs from him. The extreme anguiſh of his ſoul, cauſed drops of blood to fall from his eyes; and ſo much was he depreſſed, that he had required the conſolations of an angel. None but created beings are ſuſceptible of pain; but we apply the common modes of ſpeech to objects of an incorporeal nature, without perceiving the abuſe

of them. No man, who knows God, that is, who has ſuitable ideas of his nature, will aſſert that he has ſuffered.

But this is not the only difficulty. Modern philoſophers will not acknowledge that mankind could be ſo corrupt as to excite in the Deity any deſire of puniſhing them.—They will not allow, that one being could be condemned to ſuffer for another; or that the righteouſneſs of a juſt man, could be of any avail to a ſinner. But they do not conſider, that the Divine Juſtice required a ſacrifice which was neceſſary to effect a reconciliation with God. This denial of the neceſſity of the merits of Chriſt's ſufferings, is an opinion very prevalent at preſent, and which threatens the total ruin of Chriſtianity. For to give up this eſſential doctrine of the

neceſſity

neceſſity of a ſatisfaction, what is it but to renounce our faith in Jeſus Chriſt, who died for our ſins, and roſe again for our juſtification? At preſent, I am arguing with ſuch perſons as believe in divine revelation. As to thoſe who do not; I have already, if I am not miſtaken, evinced, that the ſcriptures are indeed the word of God, by proofs and arguments ſufficient to impreſs every unprejudiced and candid mind with the fulleſt conviction. With regard to thoſe who are perſuaded that the ſcriptures are the word of God; I flatter myſelf that it will be no difficult matter to bring the queſtion in diſpute to a ſhort iſſue. —The ſcripture is true—the ſufferings of Chriſt, or the merits which we aſcribe to them, are ſo clearly taught, that they appear to be the grand deſign, or the very ſpirit, as

it were, of this ſcheme of redemption; which truth if you admit, you muſt then acknowledge the merit of the ſufferings or the death of Chriſt.—They certainly do not act with candour and ſincerity, who attack ſome certain truth, which forms a part of a body of doctrine, that we admit to be true and unexceptionable. Can we eſteem the integrity of thoſe, who having embraced as holy and divine, a compleat ſyſtem of doctrine, permit themſelves afterwards to reject, openly or ſecretly, the moſt eſſential parts, as contrary to ſound reaſon?

Truth fears not the ſevereſt examination. I will therefore offer thoſe reaſons, which induced me to conſider the ſcheme of redemption, not only as a revealed truth, but as a reaſonable doctrine, and conſonant to the

the ideas which I have of the juſtice and goodneſs of God.

I will not, however, go ſo far as to ſay, that this manner of puniſhing and of pardoning, was the only poſſible way which God, in his infinite wiſdom, could adopt. God is Lord of many thouſand worlds, which, reaſoning from analogy, may be inhabited by other thinking beings. We know that there are beings ſuperior to man, amongſt whom ſin hath introduced itſelf; and that this ſuperior order of intelligences, is employed by God, as his inſtruments in the government of the world. In what manner does he there puniſh faults? Or how does he reclaim delinquents if they offend? Here I have not even a conjecture to offer.—The only example we have in ſcripture of the puniſhment of angels, gives us room to conclude,

clude, that God hath employed quite different means, in order to demonſtrate the hatred which he hath to evil. We are there informed, that thoſe ſuperior beings, actuated by malice and envy, revolted againſt God, and were therefore puniſhed with great ſeverity. It is ſufficient for us to know, what is our duty towards God, and what is his manner of proceeding in regard to us.

## LETTER XIII.

*Depravity of human nature. Divine wiſdom and goodneſs in recovering mankind from a ſtate of ſin and miſery. Of the duration of that puniſhment which follows vice, as its natural or judicial conſequence in any order of intelligent beings. The conduct of Divine Grace juſtified in the eye of reaſon. General ſketch of the Chriſtian religion. Its ſuitableneſs to the condition of ſinful and wretched men. Its viſible effects on the leaſt cultivated minds; and in the lower ranks of life. Deſperate folly of rejecting a revelation from God, becauſe we cannot raiſe our minds to a conception of all the Divine ideas, nor comprehend every part of the plan of redemption.*

THE object which I have had in view, in the preceding part of this work, and that to which I have confined myſelf, has been to ſhew, that human nature is in a ſtate of the deepeſt depravity and corruption; that

that God cannot look upon ſin but with abhorrence and indignation; that he regards it as an object that deſtroys all title to his countenance and favour; that he conſiders vice as a thing which is ſubverſive of the good order of the world; that it became the righteous Governor of the univerſe, to ſtigmatize and to puniſh it by certain viſible marks of his diſpleaſure: but that, on the other hand, virtue is to the Supreme Being, an object of complacency and delight. Theſe things then I ſhall take for granted; nor ſhall I add or repeat any thing in order to ſupport their truth or juſtice.

An univerſal degeneracy had overſpread the world; that reverence and worſhip which dependent creatures owe to the Author and Preſerver of their being, had vaniſhed from hearts enſlaved by every guilty paſſion and

and impure deſire. Eternity was forgotten: the threatening aſpect of this dreadful object, no longer diſturbed the repoſe of mortals; every action of man was an infringement of the laws of God. And though the ſins of men could not diſturb the felicity of the Divine Nature, which is infinitely above the reach of human malignity, yet they were a direct violation of the Divine laws—Laws founded in the very nature of things, and which fix the merit or demerit of every action and every thought with unerring juſtice.

The greateſt part of mankind were reduced to ſuch a ſtate, that the purity and holineſs of God could not but diſapprove their actions, and conſider them in a rebellious and criminal light. —Had it been better for God to have abandoned them entirely to the evil

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conſequences of their vicious inclinations, and totally have withdrawn his patronage? The Divine Goodneſs judged otherwiſe; he made a trial of this deſolate and abandoned condition in beings of a ſuperior order—in intelligences more perfect; who, though immaterial, and therefore not dependant on the body, or ſubject to the ſenſes, withdrew their obedience from him, though they were not under any invincible neceſſity of yielding to temptation.

God had a paternal tenderneſs for man; but how was he to deliver him? To ſuffer ſo great depravity to remain unpuniſhed, would have been acting in repugnance to the Divine Nature, to which the love of good is eſſential, and, on the contrary, the diſapprobation of evil. But the indignation of God is hell: and if he had permitted

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a guilty world to continue in the commiſſion of crimes; if he had abandoned ſinful men here below, and to all eternity, to this miſerable condition, without diſcovering his hatred of ſin, he had been no longer Judge of the world: his reaſonable creatures would have had no recompence to hope for, from their attachment to virtue; and no puniſhment to fear from their indulgence in vice: they would have loſt all reſpect for that juſtice which is eſſential to his nature, nor have ſubmitted to thoſe laws, whoſe violation was attended with no prejudice. All order would have been confounded; and the natural connexion that there is betwixt the good actions of intelligent beings and happineſs, betwixt their bad ones and unhappineſs, would have been diſſolved.

But do men always become better

by chaſtiſements? Do theſe compel them to be good?—Let us reflect on the condition of the fallen angels; we have no reaſon to think that their puniſhment, the natural effect of their malice, hath wrought any change in their tempers. And when we take a view of thoſe men who have groaned under the weight of God's diſpleaſure, we ſhall find, that his chaſtiſements have ſeldom made any durable impreſſions, or produced any reformation of the will: and if we extend our reſearches to Chriſtians, who enjoy the comfortable hope of a Deliverer; we may obſerve, that malefactors during their captivity, have very rarely made atonement for the crimes which they had committed againſt ſociety, but have rather been the more confirmed in their wickedneſs: deſpair has often blackened their thoughts, and exaſperated

aſperated their malignities. Sickneſs, accompanied with pious exhortations, have ſometimes produced virtuous reſolutions; but they have vaniſhed, as ſoon as the patient has been reſtored to his health.

Puniſhments, it has been ſaid, ought not to be eternal; becauſe they muſt tend to the reformation of men. But will the puniſhments of a limited time, as a few years for inſtance, or even for ages, produce in man an eternal obedience; ſince, in compariſon of eternity, any duration which we may aſſign to theſe pains, will be but infinitely ſhort? Would that impatience, that murmuring, that reſtleſſneſs under the judgments of God, which theſe limited ſufferings produce, be removed by new afflictions? and from this mode of reaſoning, would there not be re-

quired a prolongation of chaſtiſements? The knowledge, which we have of the human heart, will not permit us to hope, that the efficacy of puniſhment can convert vice into virtue. And God, who perfectly knows us, knows alſo, that this limited puniſhment muſt in the end terminate in that which is eternal.

In anſwer to this it hath been ſaid — May not the grace of God act immediately upon the depraved and uninformed mind, to enlighten and to ſanctify it; to inſpire it with wiſdom and virtue, and transform it into a new creature? But according to this opinion, no ſatisfaction will be made to the Divine Juſtice. Intelligent beings, after having tranſgreſſed the laws of their ſovereign Maſter, would obtain the greateſt rewards without feeling the leaſt effect of the indignation

nation of God, or, in other words, of his abhorrence of evil. Beſides, the inſeparable connexion which there is betwixt bad actions and the natural conſequences of the diſapprobation of God, would be broken. God treats us as reaſonable beings, endowed with the liberty of acting: his grace furniſhes us with means which are compatible with this free-will; as, exhortations, counſels, and powerful incentives; but, at the ſame time, hath left us the power of reſiſtance. Without this liberty, we ſhould be abſurd and contradictory beings, having the faculty of reaſoning, but controuled by the influence of ſome exterior agent, which would impoſe as unavoidable a reſtraint upon our wills, as if we were wholly deſtitute of the exalted faculties of liberty and underſtanding. Our actions would not be

our own; beſides, there muſt be this alternative — either man would be a mere machine, wholly directed by ſome ſupernatural impreſſions, without the power of acting; or elſe there would remain in the hearts of men, even thoſe improved by grace, a number of imperfections which could not render us acceptable to God, or exempt us from puniſhment. The Deity does not act like the kings of the earth, who pardon many errors, and even crimes — who can eſteem ſubjects which are uſeful to them; whom they can alſo recompence, though, in ſome reſpects they are reprehenſible; becauſe they perceive that there is no perſon, however capable of ſerving and pleaſing them, that is abſolutely exempt from faults. They raiſe to honour and preferment, thoſe in whom good qualities predominate

dominate over bad, and who have faithfully acquitted themſelves in the employments with which they were entruſted. In God, all is order, and that in the greateſt perfection; his weights and his meaſures are therefore perfect. No evil thought that enters into the heart of man — no criminal deſire can there meet with indulgence. In proportion to their turpitude, God will regard them with diſapprobation and abhorrence. He weighs all tranſgreſſions in the ſcale of equity; he enters them in the books, which will be opened at the great day of accounts: and if they are inſcribed in the regiſter of human iniquities, they will alſo be found in the book of puniſhments, which are deſtined to every man according to his works. The beſt of men, by reaſon of their imperfections, will be, by turns, the ob-

jects of God's favour and diſpleaſure—will be alternately obnoxious to puniſhment, and in a condition which will entitle them to reward.

In the times in which we live, I may be thought, perhaps, too ſevere; but I ſpeak from the authority of ſcripture. Man, in this life, cannot attain to perfect virtue, even though God ſhould condeſcend to direct him by his grace. The juſtice of mortals is far from being immaculate; this imperfection may, perhaps, be a preſervative from greater evil. Many of the ſins to which we are ſubject, remain buried with us in the grave. The love of voluptuouſneſs follows us not to eternity, any more than avarice. The firſt of theſe vices has no means of gratification when the ſoul is ſeparated from the body; the other will be deprived of its object in a place, where the

the metal it was ſo fond of amaſſing, will not be found.—But there is another vice much more odious, which hath a powerful influence over the ſoul, and which may follow it into the world of ſpirits. This vice infected the ſeraphims, and was productive of much vexation in the habitations of the juſt. The vice I mean, is pride. Human virtue, imperfect as it is, is often tarniſhed with this fault—a fault more odious to God than any other, and which may even render us unhappy in heaven itſelf. Pride is that internal ſatisfaction, or that complacency, with which we conſider our own perfections. It preſumes to call God to an account, and prevents us from acknowledging our obligations to him. We may obſerve in the works of *Seneca*, the pride with which the men

men of that age, becauſe of ſome virtues that rendered them beneficial to their country, exalted themſelves above the Divine Nature: and even among true Chriſtians, in that church which calls itſelf the reformed, this vice hath blended itſelf with their virtues.

Are not the imperfections of men the moſt effectual, though at the ſame time the moſt mortifying means of repreſſing this pride? God would not remove from St. Paul every moral defect, though this apoſtle ſo often requeſted it by earneſt prayer: it was neceſſary for him to be imperfect, that he might perceive how much he ſtood in need of grace. It is, indeed, impoſſible that man ſhould of himſelf attain to a degree of rectitude abſolutely free from fault. And God, perhaps, may deſign by this, to cheriſh

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in the hearts of men, ſentiments of humility. This faultleſs perfection will never be confirmed by the omnipotent ſanction, till it has paſſed the judgment of his great tribunal, and enjoyed the ineffable light of God's preſence, before whom there is no darkneſs.

The ſufferings of a Mediator was another of the means choſen by God, of reconciling us to himſelf; this ſhould likewiſe create in us an humble diſpoſition. God was inclined to ſave mankind, not from the righteouſneſs of man himſelf, or from any merit of his own, but only through the redemption which is in Chriſt. It is by faith that he is juſtified, and not by the accompliſhment of the law. This is the invariable doctrine of revelation, as preached both by St. Paul and by our Saviour himſelf.—

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" Without me ye can do nothing.—
" This is life eternal, that they be-
" lieve in him whom God hath ſent.
" Man, juſtified by the grace which
" is in another, hath no cauſe for
" pride or vanity."

The plan of redemption adopted by God, is perfectly conſonant to the inclinations moſt prevalent in the heart of man. It operates both on his hopes and fears; without hope, malice would carry itſelf to the laſt extremities; without fear, the paſſions would know no bounds. Fear is excited by the ſeverity with which the Mediator of men hath felt the effects of the hatred that God hath for ſin. It has been already mentioned, and I take this opportunity of repeating it —that Jeſus, in the laſt hours of his life—in that dreadful night which he paſſed in the Mount of Olives—

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ſunk under the weight of the indignation which God hath to ſin; his ſoul was ſorrowful even unto death; in the midſt of the pains which he ſuffered upon the croſs, he complained, that God had forſaken him. What then muſt be thoſe ſufferings which could make ſuch an impreſſion upon a ſoul like our Saviour's; who, knowing beforehand all that he muſt ſuffer, did not voluntarily expoſe himſelf to it?

Theſe terrible effects of the hatred of God to ſin, muſt juſtify the Divine purity in the eyes of all intelligent beings; they ſufficiently prove the abhorrence with which the juſt Judge of the univerſe contemplates evil, and that he could not pardon the ſinner without chaſtiſement. This proceeding was likewiſe neceſſary to reconcile the rights of juſtice with the claims of mercy

—that the one might be ſatisfied without prejudice to the other. The minds of men muſt be ſeized with a rational fear, when they perceive, that the puniſhment of their faults was inevitable, and that it fell with ſo great violence upon him who had devoted himſelf as a ſacrifice for them—who, though fortified by the divinity that was within him, felt, nevertheleſs, ſo great inquietude for the ſins of others. Muſt they not tremble to fall into the hands of the living God, who, in reſpect to ſin, is a fire which devours and which conſumes, and who ſpared not the ſins of men, in the perſon of his beloved Son?

And indeed, ſince the reconciliation which hath been eſtabliſhed betwixt God and ſinful man, the impreſſion that the ſufferings of our Saviour muſt naturally make on our minds,

continues to diſplay the efficacy of them. But yet without faith and obedience we cannot enjoy that pardon which is the fruit of the ſatisfaction made to the juſtice of God. When we are remiſs in the performance of theſe conditions—when we neglect to appropriate to ourſelves the promiſed pardon, by an active and operating faith; when, by a freſh revolt, we act in oppoſition to thoſe eternal laws which prohibit vice, but which require the practice of virtue, we loſe all pretenſions to the redemption which Jeſus hath acquired for us, and we again incur the indignation of God, whoſe ſeverity is ſo apparent in the ſufferings of Chriſt.

But the effect of this fear is rendered ſtill more efficacious, by the hopes which the ſame object creates in our ſoul; God is appeaſed; he conſiders

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ſin as blotted out; his grace diſplays in us thoſe happy influences, which all thoſe experience who do not voluntarily reject them. The Saviour himſelf, who hath diſcharged our debt, and paid our ranſom, promiſes us his aſſiſtance. He is gone up into heaven, where he has prepared manſions for thoſe who follow him. The deſigns of God towards us have been revealed; the way which will conduct us to happineſs is known; conditions have been propoſed; and the means of conforming ourſelves to the ordinances of God, have been communicated. This is that conformity which will render us acceptable to him; and his favour is true happineſs.

We know the importance of eternity; we are well convinced, from the indubitable teſtimony of him who hath been ſent to us from the eternity where

where he dwelt, that we are called to life everlaſting; and that unchangeable happineſs will be the rewards of thoſe who are faithful in this ſhort ſpace of probation.

We are not ignorant of the ſtrict juſtice of God, from the ſorrowful inſtance of our Mediator who ſuffered for us: the condition of men who diſpleaſe him will be miſerable, as it will be glorious to thoſe who are objects of his grace; this is a truth, of which no reaſonable man will doubt. Two ways are open before us; the one, though mortifying to our ſenſes, will nevertheleſs become more agreeable, through his grace, and will in the end conduct us to unalterable felicity:—the other, though it may gratify our inclinations for a ſhort time, will at laſt plunge us into an abyſs of endleſs wretchedneſs. There are

no perſons ſo well inſtructed in the motives for an holy life, as the profeſſors of Chriſtianity. They are perfectly familiar even to perſons of a common underſtanding; and in compariſon of the certainty of their perſuaſion, the conjectures and reaſonings of the ancient philoſophers were like ſhadows which were too tranſient and inefficacious to make any impreſſions. Every Chriſtian can conſult the oracles of revelation, and by the favour of this divine light, can penetrate into thoſe myſteries, which were unknown to the world before the coming of the Mediator ſent by God. Among the moſt illiterate, thoſe who are conſtantly occupied in manual labour, and in providing for their daily wants, we may, nevertheleſs, diſcover ſome ſentiments of religion, animated by a zeal,

zeal, and ſoftened by a contentment which can only ſpring in our boſoms, from the comfortable aſſurances of the Goſpel of Chriſt.

This world is only a place of trial, where the weakneſs of man is ſtrengthened by the power of grace communicated by God. Before the coming of our Saviour, men were bewildered in error; were led aſtray by the violence of their paſſions, and wandered about like loſt ſheep. But when the great Shepherd appeared, he called together the ſcattered flock—he went before them, and conducted them into the way which leads to heaven: his country is ours; he hath paid for us thoſe debts which we were not able to diſcharge; we are born again; the re-eſtabliſhment of our primitive innocence begins with this new life.

The juſtice of God is ſatisfied by

the ſufferings of our Redeemer; grace hath eſtabliſhed its empire over man, who is now reconciled. Theſe, according to my ideas, are the great motives which have engaged the Maſter and Judge of the univerſe, to give us a Redeemer, to the end that he might make our peace by his ſufferings. I may poſſibly be miſtaken in ſome of my conjectures; it is very difficult for mortals to judge rightly of divine things: theſe are, however, inconteſtable truths, that it hath pleaſed God to ſend into the world, at the time appointed, the Mediator which he had promiſed and announced by the prophets; to whom the Divinity was united in an incomprehenſible manner; and who, during the time that he ſojourned upon earth, not only inſtructed men in the truth, but alſo

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communicated the merciful deſigns of God concerning our ſalvation—that his juſtice hath been ſatisfied by the voluntary ſufferings of the Saviour; and that he hath opened a way to the throne of grace, where we may be received as unpolluted beings.

This is a ſhort view of revelation. From what has been ſaid, it is eaſy to perceive, that it was neceſſary for us to have for a mediator, or for a propitiator, (for ſo the ſcripture calls him) ſome perſon who was holy, innocent, and without fault. A ſinful man might have ſuffered for himſelf only; though I ſee no reaſon to believe that his ſufferings would have been ſufficient even for himſelf; but moſt aſſuredly they could not have made atonement for the ſins of another, becauſe he would himſelf have been an object

of the indignation of God; there would have been wanting ſome other means, foreign to himſelf, to have procured his own pardon.

But the wiſdom and goodneſs of God hath executed what was beyond the abilities of man. The Divinity, which dwelt in the perſon of the Mediator, hath highly exalted him; the ſuccours which it afforded, rendered him abſolutely juſt and incapable of ſin; the voluntary ſacrifice which he hath offered for the ſins of the world, was free from all blemiſh, and hath been accepted by the perfect juſtice of God; who, in the perſon of him, whoſe innocence was immaculate, hath fully diſcovered what are the wages of ſin, and that his eyes are too pure to behold iniquity. Without this inſtance of benevolence in God,

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it had been impoſſible for his ſinful creatures to have eſcaped the puniſhment they had incurred; but the demands of his juſtice, which ſees every action in its true light, have been fully ſatisfied; he hath accepted the ſufferings of a Mediator, whom he hath dignified by an union with himſelf, as a ſatisfaction which it was not in the power of man to make.

I ſhall not, in this place, examine the great variety of objections, which have been offered by thoſe who refuſe to acknowledge the neceſſity of a Mediator, and who pretend, that we cannot be juſtified by the righteouſneſs of another. I ſee, in part, the reaſons which induced the Supreme Being to accept of a vicarious ſacrifice, and alſo the great advantages which reſult from this plan of recon-

ciliation. But though we ſhould not clearly diſcern thoſe things, yet we ought not to be too haſty in judging of the deſigns of God, by our ideas, or by our manner of thinking.

It appears, then, that we are too apt to confound things which are very different from each other. A ſinner cannot be acceptable to God; neither can he procure his approbation, on account of the death of a Mediator, as long as he continues in ſin. The immediate effect of this death conſiſts in rendering a man, though ſinful, capable of receiving the Divine favour, when, by uſing the means which are furniſhed by grace, he renounces the ſlavery of ſin to ſerve and obey God; the infirmities, which are inſeparable from human nature, will no longer be imputed to him,

him. By this plan of redemption, man is reformed; a renovation of life ſucceeds; and he is placed in ſuch a ſtate, that the Divine compaſſion may receive him into grace and favour.

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## LETTER XIV.

*Recapitulation, with ſome farther illuſtrations, of the foregoing remarks and reaſoning. Peroration; and exhortation of the author to his daughter.*

LET us, then, my daughter, embrace with gratitude, this general pardon; let us offer our tribute of praiſe to him, who, out of his infinite love, found out a ranſom for us; let us, with confidence, walk in that way in which Chriſt hath gone before us; let us endure with chearfulneſs, the tranſient ſufferings of this life, nor view with horror the approaches of another. The conſolation which muſt ſupport us in life and in death, is now imparted; by the help of this, we can, without fear, and in perfect

perfect tranquillity of mind, contemplate the progreſſive advances of our diſſolution, and boldly enter into eternity.

We are ſenſible of our depravity, and, if we would ſpeak ingenuouſly, we muſt confeſs that we are ſlaves to our wills, and that it is with reluctance we ſubmit our conduct to the divine precepts of the Chriſtian religion. The inclinations of the fleſh are ſtrong and vigorous; they attach us to the preſent life—they acquire a domination over all our faculties, and baniſh from the will every thought of futurity. The love of our Saviour, who redeemed us, is cold and languid; and we have but a ſervile fear of God; who, in our imagination, is too holy. Theſe ſentiments are deeply rooted in the dark receſſes of our hearts; every thing conſpires to remind us of our weakneſs,

weakneſs, and to convince us, that humility is a diſpoſition which becomes, in the higheſt degree, creatures ſo corrupt and imperfect.

Theſe are diſagreeable truths; and the confeſſion which we are obliged to make of them, muſt be very mortifying to human pride; but it is uſeful and ſalutary to preſent them to the mind. When we reflect, on the one hand, upon our incapacity of delivering ourſelves from this corruption; and when we conſider, on the other, the greatneſs and purity of our Judge, who muſt be diſpleaſed at our depraved condition, and whoſe diſpleaſure is the worſt of evils; when, I ſay, we reflect on theſe things, they muſt ſink us into deſpair. But God hath manifeſted his charitable deſigns towards us; he hath given us the greateſt and the nobleſt hopes. We have it

our power to be for ever happy; and though this corruption will always adhere to us, and is never radically removed, yet it will be no obſtacle to our felicity. The Divine Goodneſs hath accepted a ſatisfaction for theſe imperfections, which are inherent in our nature.

I ſhall not here take notice of thoſe abſtruſe queſtions, which have been ſtarted, about the liberty of man: It is an impenetrable myſtery. The philoſophers of our days think they have good reaſons for baniſhing all liberty from the world. "We are governed "by neceſſity, they ſay; all the reſo- "lutions which we form, or all the "actions of our will, have their cauſe "in ſomething which happened the "preceding moment."—But the internal conviction of my own mind, rejects theſe ſubtleties; I perceive

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in myſelf, a ſelf-determining power; I obſerve, that, if we, in a great meaſure, depend upon our ſenſes, and upon the paſſions which they excite, it is not, however, impoſſible for us to reſiſt them. I ſpeak from experience; none of the paſſions are unconquerable; the idea of an infinite Being, who is always preſent with us, and the recourſe we may have to him by prayer, are ſufficient means to bring them into ſubjection. We have the power of removing from our minds, the thoughts of eternity, if diſagreeable to us; we have alſo the power of reflecting upon its importance: the capacity which we have of becoming virtuous, conſiſts in our choice of giving or refuſing our attention, to whatever agrees or diſagrees with our favourite purſuits.

Let us employ the time preſent

eternity

eternity will be our reward if we make a good uſe of it. Let us always have before our eyes, the nature and conſequences of ſin; let us remember, that it will deprive us of the favour of God, and expoſe us to his indignation. Let us reflect on the value of eternity; and on that life and that immortality, which Chriſt hath brought to light by the goſpel. The ſmall ſatisfactions of this preſent ſhort life, which are but puerile amuſements, muſt diſappear, when placed in competition with the greatneſs and durability of the glory which is hereafter.

Let us never forget, that we were born for eternity, and that an affair of ſo great importance ſhould be the principal occupation of our lives. Let us follow the light that will conduct us thither—the precepts of

our Saviour plainly point out the way. How inſenſible then muſt we be, to ſuffer ourſelves to be directed by any other?

We acknowledge the corruption of our nature; we confeſs, that it terminates in death; we are perſuaded, that Jeſus had the words of eternal life. Let us then ſtudy them with attention, apply them with ſincerity to ourſelves; continually inculcate them on our minds, and ſeek the aſſiſtance of that light which was brought from heaven to earth.

We are ignorant of a great number of things. We know not, in particular, the operations of the grace of God; nor how it enlightens the mind. No perſon can ſincerely devote himſelf to the Supreme Being, without perceiving the emotions of his grace. —"If a man keep my command-

"ments,

"ments, ſays our Saviour, he will "*perceive*, that I am come from God." —It is the influence of his grace, which excites in us good deſires; which repreſents to us our own unworthineſs, and which animates our ſouls with an ardent deſire of procuring the favour of God. Theſe are ſentiments, which every wiſe and rational man is capable of experiencing.

I am well perſuaded, that we have in this grace, a powerful ſuccour to liberate us from ſin, and make us aſpire after that condition which is more worthy of man.

I muſt confeſs, that the manner of the co-operation of grace, is an inexplicable myſtery; it is, however, a revealed truth. The mode of its acting is too obſcure for us to comprehend. We know not the laws of the actions of ſpirits. We know not the

manner by which one body moves another. How then ſhall we diſcern the method, by which one ſpirit acts upon another ſpirit? Perhaps, if we too clearly perceived the operation of grace upon our minds, it might be an obſtacle to the exerciſe of our liberty. —The advice of our Saviour is a ſufficient direction to us in this matter. —" Search the ſcriptures—believe in " me—keep my commandments, for " they are eaſy."—God will do the reſt. Theſe commandments will be eaſy to us, when once we are convinced of the importance of eternity; for what can the preſent life offer, which can be compared with what we may either hope for, or fear, during this eternity?

We are reſtored from the loweſt ſtate of abaſement and dejection. We are animated with the moſt comfortable

fortable promiſes. We now walk with confidence in that road, which hath been marked out for us with ſo much wiſdom; and which ſo well correſponds with our inclinations and abilities. We leave behind us thoſe vices which tended to eſtrange us from God and happineſs; before us is a benevolent Being, who offers, to the victorious, incorruptible crowns, as the recompence of victory; which victory he alſo helps us to acquire. We may now reſt ſatisfied with reſpect to our future condition, without perplexing ourſelves about the trials which we ſhall have to undergo, and which are yet at a diſtance. Let us only employ to advantage the preſent hour. The means of ſalvation, the ſacred writings, the precepts of our Saviour, are in our hands; we inſenſibly draw near to the deſired

harbour; the approaches of diſſolution become leſs formidable, the nearer we arrive to the happy manſions of eternity, where error and vice will be diſarmed, and have no more power over us.

Thoſe perſons, who have been ſo happily ſituated as to be able to devote a great part of their time to the ſtudy of theſe moſt important of all truths, and to make it the principal employment of their lives, will be better qualified to exhibit them to your view, in a more animating and affecting manner, and ſo as to make a greater impreſſion upon your mind. Receive them, however, my daughter, from the mouth of a father, who conſiders himſelf on the verge of life; they are the moſt precious marks of tenderneſs which he can give you.

Theſe inſtructions would have been more perfect, if his capacity had been more extenſive. They are, however, the reſult of his reflections, and of the reſearches which he has made after truth; they are alſo the effect of his internal conviction. Your father, who now addreſſes you, has had his doubts; he has ſometimes been miſtaken; and has wiſhed, in thoſe moments, that the conſequences of ſin were not ſo grievous. He hath not been exempt from falling; but the victorious grace of God has kindly come to his relief. He can now behold, without fear, his approaching death. Beyond this period, he ſees objects of joy, and ſubjects of hope; all which invite him to preſs forwards to that eternity, where death will be vaniſhed, and where ſin will have no acceſs. *Your* heart, which

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is ſo little corrupted with vicious ſentiments, will find leſs difficulty in the way that leads to life. After having finiſhed your race, you will meet your father in thoſe glorious and peaceful habitations, where the thoughts of our corruption will no more be productive of inquietude and ſhame, nor the ſufferings of the preſent time fill any longer our eyes with tears.

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Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 15 June, 2016